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DRAGON™

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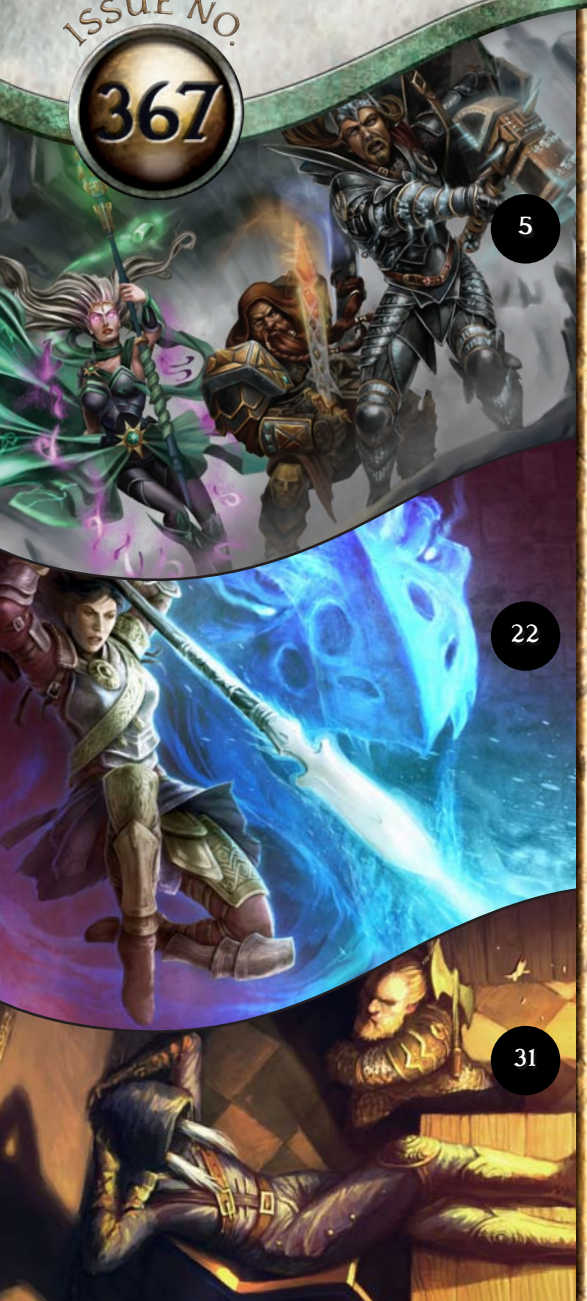


Contents

FEATURES

5 **EPIC FAERÛN**

By Richard Baker

Heroes of the Realms find new options at epic levels with these new epic destinies.

11 **ECOLOGY OF THE GENASI**

By Rodney Thompson

Learn about the history, society, and culture of one of the new races from the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*.

22 **INTELLIGENT ITEMS**

By Logan Bonner

Only in *Dragon*! New rules for intelligent magic items in your D&D game.

31 **CHILDREN OF DARKNESS**

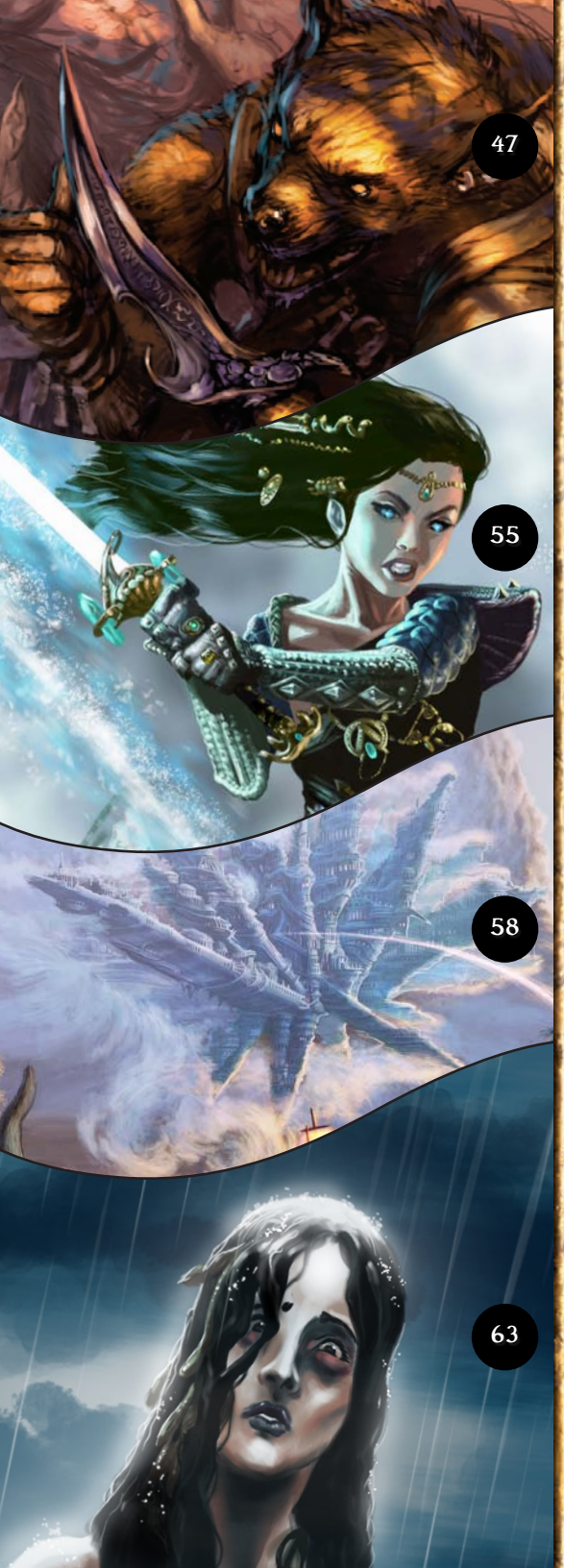
By Robert J. Schwalb

Most drow worship the spider queen Lolth, chafing under her rule, but glorying in destruction in her name. But some rebel drow fight their heritage, and choose a path less traveled.

42 **BESTIARY: GOLEMS AND OOZES**

By Greg Bilsland

New dungeon guardians for your latest adventure.



47 **PLAYING GNOLLS**
By Keith Baker
If you've always wanted to play a gnoll PC, now's your chance. This article comes with plenty of information on gnoll adventurers, along with racial feats for your gnoll hero.

55 **CLASS ACTS: SWORDMAGE**
By Greg Bilsland
New powers and options for your first swordmage character, created straight out of the Forgotten Realms Player's Guide.

58 **REALMSLORE: AURIL'S HALL**
By Brian James
The hall of the Frostmaiden is explored here, along with the rumors of its many dangerous denizens.

63 **EXPEDITIONARY DISPATCHES: JANUS GULL**
By Glenn McDonald
This mysterious village vanished into the sea during a deadly storm, only to return once a year on the anniversary of its disappearance.

ON THE COVER
Illustration by Dan Scott

COLUMNS

4 **EDITORIAL**

67 **DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT: THE EVOLUTION OF MAGIC ITEMS**
By Andy Collins and Mike Mearls
Learn about the design and development teams' approach to magic items.

69 **CONFESSIONS OF A FULL-TIME WIZARD**
By Shelly Mazzanoble
Shelly discusses how her experience as a DM has made her a better player.

73 **RPGA REPORT**
By Chris Tulach
This month, Chris tells us more about the Living Forgotten Realms campaign, and how you can get involved.

75 **AMPERSAND**
By Bill Slavicsek
Bill talks about more of the big decisions being made concerning D&D.

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367

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Sideshow

As I mentioned in last month's editorial, I spent some quality time sitting on the players' side of the DM screen in the game I normally run. I gave up my DMing duties in lieu of a chance to roll up a character and ride shotgun with my group.

Well, we had another session, and everyone was a lot more bloodthirsty this time out, including the DM. Lots of combat. Lots of hilarity.

To set the stage, this game wasn't a continuation of our normal campaign. It was always intended to be a one-off game, so everyone had new characters. At first glance, it seemed like a more viable way to conduct this particular experiment—handing the reigns reins of the group off to a new DM, but in the short term. But when we all came to the table, the first thing that struck me was the tone of the game.

Everyone knew this was a one-off game, so we all were a little silly when it came to character creation. Characters had ridiculous names and ridiculous personality traits. For example, one player's character had a name composed almost entirely of consonants, and my character, and another, playing a kobold, spoke as rapidly and as often as he could. The fun bit was that we all created our characters independently, but what we ended up bringing to the table was, well, a sideshow.

At first, I felt sorry for our interim DM. I thought she'd end up storming out after 15 minutes. But I was wrong. She embraced our zaniness and found ways to work our off-beat humor into the adventure. In fact, because this was intended to be a one-off adventure, the adventure had minimal story. This wasn't The Lord of the Rings, by any stretch. Our quirky, over-the-top characters really created the story for the game. We took the story that was there, and embellished it with our personalities, and made it our own.

This got me to thinking about the value of humor in a D&D game. Don't get me wrong—I like to make progress in a campaign. I like to gain XP, explore new places, learn about new story hooks, and, well, play the game. But I value the social aspect of the game intensely. And humor is probably one of the single-biggest bonding elements you could introduce into any social experience. I'm pretty lenient as a DM. I enjoy a good joke as much as anyone, and I'll frequently engage in humorous back-and-forth with my players at the table during a session, which I know many DMs would poo-poo as a sign of a game out of control. What I hadn't considered was taking a humorous, in-character outburst and spinning it right into the story of the adventure to get the group back on track. For example, at one point in our game, some read-aloud text described scratches along the walls and floor in a room, merely as flavor. One of our players made a joke about captives being held against their will, and our intrepid DM—once the laughter died down—immediately jumped on the joke and said that yes, in fact that was exactly the source of the markings. One joke, one laugh, one spin and we were once again back on track. I'm going to keep my eye out for instances like this next session.

That said, you need to know your group. If you're stepping away from the screen for a session or two, expect that players won't have the same attachment to their fresh characters, so they'll likely treat the game with more silliness than normal. Most groups, in my experience, will relish the opportunity to crack wise a little more often. Just be aware, if you do this, that your entire group is on board, and ready to treat the one-off with the same gravity (or lack thereof).

The other thing I learned? A break is nice. I think that from here on out, I'll schedule regular one-off breaks every few months with the group. Sharing the DM experience is always good; it gives me a break from DMing, I get to hone my comedic gifts, and maybe best of all, I get a chance to game with some players and friends I usually sit on the opposite side of the screen from. Sounds like a win-win to me.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

EPIC FAERÛN

by Richard Baker

illustrations by Gonzalo Flores

THE FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting is famed for the powerful characters who have appeared in Faerûn over the years. Epic characters are a longstanding tradition in Abeir-Toril, ranging from the dreadful lich Larloch—the most powerful of Faerûn's mighty wizards—to heroic figures such as the Seven Sisters or Elminster, the Sage of Shadowdale. With the advent of the Spellplague and the passage of a century, many of Faerûn's famous residents have since departed to their eternal rewards (or punishments), others still suvive . . . and the boldest and most successful of player characters can hope to someday join their ranks.

Epic characters in the Realms pursue a variety of destinies, including all the destinies described in the *Player's Handbook*. Archmages, Demigods, Deadly Ricksters, and Eternal Seekers have all left their mark on the setting. In addition, the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Player's Guide* describes the Chosen epic destiny—a path that transforms a player character into the favored mortal agent of one of Faerûn's powerful deities. Three new epic destinies followed by Faerûn's mightiest heroes are described here: the Elf High Mage, the Harper of Legend, and the Mythic Sovereign.

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Elf High Mage

You have embarked on the study of the most powerful magic known to mortals: arselu tel-quessir, *the Great Art of the People. Your arcane works might endure for millennia.*

Prerequisites: 21st-level wizard; eladrin or elf

For twenty thousand years the elves of Faerûn have created wonders of magic greater and more enduring than any work in stone or wood. Dimensional gates, invisible roadways linking distant points, hidden vaults, mighty mythal wards to protect kingdoms, cities buttressed by unfailing spells—all these things and more were crafted by high magic, the very pinnacle of the elven arcane arts. With high magic the elves of old sundered Evermeet from the world, created the extradimensional realm of Sildëyuir, and broke the power of Faerûn's draconic rulers by binding them to the Rage. Others have harnessed magic of similar power at different times in Faerûn's history—the Netherese, the Imaskari, the Shoon—but few of their works ever matched the longevity, the artistry, or the world-changing scope of the spells wrought by elven high magic.

Usually the path to high magic is a long one indeed; an elf or eladrin is rarely considered ready for instruction in this ancient art before he or she reaches 300 years of age.

The secrets of this powerful and dangerous lore are in the keeping of the *selutaar,* or the Elf High Mages. In the days of the great elven kingdoms of the Crown Wars there were hundreds of Elf High Mages, but today only a handful remains in the world. (Most of the Elf High Mages are sun elves, moon elves, and star elves, so they might more properly be called Eladrin High Mages, but such distinctions are lost on those who aren't elves.) Usually the path to high magic is a long one indeed; an elf or eladrin is rarely considered ready for instruction in this ancient art before he or she reaches 300 years of age, and many begin their instruction decades later. However, a few exceptional individuals—for example, the sun elf Araevin Teshurr, who reshaped the mythal of Myth Drannor in the years following the reconquest of that realm—have defied this custom in the past.

Although any Elf High Mage is a potent arcane spellcaster by definition, an Elf High Mage's true power does not lie in mastery of battle magic. Elven high magic consists of a set of rare and powerful rituals, mostly dealing with the creation of mythals, which are permanent magical wardings woven over a wide area in which the mage can anchor many different protective or useful effects. The most powerful such rituals require multiple Elf High Mages to combine their efforts for months of arduous spellcasting.

Immortality

By the time your life's works are finished and your destiny is accomplished, little remains of your mortal shell. You have become a flame of living magic, shining through a fragile veil of flesh. All who look upon you can sense the unseen radiance that floods your form. The call of Arvandor grows stronger with each passing day, as does the promise of blissful rest in the Elvenhome. With nothing more than a simple act of will, you allow your body to fall away into nothingness and take up your place as one of the wisest and most honored of Arvandor's shining hosts.

Some Elf High Mages choose to deny themselves the rest of Arvandor and instead use their last act to bind themselves to a great work of high magic. Joining yourself to a mythal, you greatly strengthen an ancient work, infusing it with an arcane lifeforce so that it can heal, grow, and change over time. From time to time your people summon your consciousness to the fore to seek your advice and to honor the memory of your living wisdom and heroism.

Elf High Mage Features

All Elf High Mages have the following class features.

One with Magic (21st level): You develop an intuitive connection to the currents of arcane power surrounding you. Increase your Wisdom score by 2. You can use the detect magic function of the Arcana skill as a free action on your turn. After an extended rest, roll three d20 and keep the results. At any time before your next extended rest, you can substitute one of these results for that of an arcane attack roll or Arcana check you make. Doing so expends that saved result.

High Magic (21st level): You enact arcane rituals with greater skill and efficiency than any other spellcaster. You gain a +5 bonus to Arcana checks made to perform rituals. When you perform a ritual, you pay only half the normal cost. You can wield high magic (see the sidebar).

Sustained by Magic (24th level): Once per day when you become bloodied or reach 0 hit points, you can heal yourself by expending an arcane attack power. If you expend an encounter attack power, you can spend a healing surge, end one condition currently affecting you, and teleport up to 10 squares. If you expend a daily attack power, you can spend 1 or 2 healing surges, end all conditions currently

affecting you, and teleport up to 20 squares. The power you expend has no other effect.

Empowered by Life (30th level): When you have no healing surges left, you can choose to use the tension of the boundary between your life and your death to power your magic. You can use an encounter power you have already expended or gain a +4 bonus to any attack roll with a spell. At the end of your turn after doing either, you lose hit points equal to one-quarter your maximum hit points. You can use a daily power you have already expended or turn a hit with a spell into a critical hit. At the end of your turn after doing either, you lose hit points equal to one-half your maximum hit points. You can do more than one of these in a single turn.

High Magic

High magic consists of a set of a dozen or so rituals known only to Elf High Mages. All require months, sometimes years, of work. They are extremely expensive and extremely difficult; most high magic rituals require several Elf High Mages to act in concert and expend ritual components costing millions of gold pieces. Rituals exist for creating mythals, shaping or restoring existing mythals, cloaking wide areas with spells of concealment and confusion, growing great buildings and fortresses from the natural rock and forest, or raising dimensional barriers to wall off extraplanar threats. As an Elf High Mage, your character can participate in mighty works such as these. If you propose a high magic work, and you convince other Elf High Mages of its necessity, they participate in your high magic rituals. But given the amount of time and effort required, new works of high magic are few and far between. They're outside the scope of the typical D&D game mechanics and are best handled as story events in the campaign.

Eladrin High Mage Power

Starshine upon the People — Elf High Mage Utility 2

You summon a shower of glittering stardust that drifts down over your allies, reinvigorating them and heartening them for the battle.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Close** burst 10
Target: Each ally in burst

Effect: The targets can spend a healing surge and immediately make a saving throw against one condition affecting them that a save can end. In addition, eladrin, elves, and half-elves affected by the power gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of the encounter.

Harper of Legend

You have earned a special place in the never-ending battle against tyranny and oppression, and you have gained the blessing of deities who oppose them. In years to come your name will be spoken in the same breath as those of other great Harpers who have gone before you—Storm Silverhand, Cylyria of Twilight Hall, Arilyn Moonblade, and more—for you are a Master Harper.

Prerequisites: 21st level; good or lawful good alignment; training in any two of Diplomacy, Insight, Nature, or Stealth; membership in the Harpers (see the sidebar)

The Harpers are a secret society of good heroes who work against tyranny and darkness. Centuries ago, seven gods and goddesses opposed to evil and oppression—Corellon, Mielikki, Mystra, Oghma, Selûne, Silvanus, and Tymora—met one night in the sacred glade known as the Dancing Place to collectively extend their blessings to mortals who vowed to battle against the darkness. Harpers who serve long and well, showing exceptional wisdom and compassion, eventually earn the accolade of Master Harper. And a few Master Harpers who become the greatest champions of this ancient order become legendary figures, mantled in the divine blessings bestowed by the Seven long ago. You are a Harper of Legend, one of the most honored members of the society with a long record of bold deeds and daring exploits to your credit.

The Harpers have existed for twelve centuries in one form or another; the current one is the third incarnation of the ancient society. The Harpers of today were founded sixty years ago on the ashes of the previous society, which was split into opposing factions by the actions of Khelben Blackstaff a decade before the Spellplague and then overwhelmed in the chaos of the Spellplague years. For a time it seemed that this noble tradition would pass from the world entirely, but a small spark survived. Eaerlraun Shadowlyn, Master of Moongleam Tower in Everlund, kept alive the Harper traditions and nurtured a new generation of Harpers. In the shadows of Netheril he saw the greatest threat confronting the free peoples of Faerûn, and he dedicated his life to building a secret society capable of checking the shades' designs and uniting their enemies against them. So it is that today the Harpers are Netheril's secret enemies, and the protectors of Luruar, Evereska, the Dalelands, and all other people who stand against Netheril's dominion.

Immortality

The blessings of the Seven Gods of the Dancing Place protect and invigorate you for all your days, but they do not make you deathless. When death finally finds you, you become a disembodied protector and guide to other heroes following in your path—a Ghost Harper. Like other noble spirits such as Cylyria of Berdusk or Dathlue Mistwinter, you are part of a shining company whose vigilance remains undimmed by death.

Harper of Legend Features

All Harpers of Legend have the following class features.

Harper's Study (21st level): Harpers are well-traveled souls who learn more than most people do. Choose an encounter power of 13th level or lower from your class (or a class you're multiclassed into). You gain that as a bonus encounter power. You can retrain this choice later, but you can choose only powers whose level is no higher than your level –6.

Blessing of Mielikki (24th level): You begin a day with 2 action points instead of 1. Each time an enemy in an encounter spends an action point, you gain the ability to spend 1 additional action point in that encounter. Bold and decisive action is the hallmark of a Harper when combat becomes necessary.

Spectral Harpist (30th level): Your fate to become a spectral Harper is nearly ready to claim you. Once per day when you die, your body disintegrates into silver dust and your spirit walks free. You regain maximum hit points and gain the insubstantial and phasing qualities, immunity to poison, and resist necrotic 30. You lose half your remaining healing surges. After your next extended rest, you reform your body. If you die in spectral Harper form, you are dead.

Harper of Legend Power

Tymora Smiles Harper of Legend Utility 26

The Lady Who Smiles favors you, intervening to shield you from a dire peril.

Daily ✦ Divine
Free Action **Personal**

Effect: When you gain a condition that a save can end, you can end that condition, or when an enemy scores a critical hit against you, you can make that attack a miss instead.

Harper Membership

The Harpers are few in number these days, and they carefully hide their affiliation with the organization. Most are brought into the society by experienced Harpers, who keep their eyes open for heroes who show courage, compassion, discretion, and effectiveness in their adventures. Sometimes this is a matter of happenstance—a Harper agent might recruit a band of footloose adventurers for a mission she can't take on alone, and winds up impressed by the talents of her companions. Other times heroes with the qualities the Harpers admire gain fame during their own adventures and are quietly approached about membership. There are no special requirements other than the desire to fight oppression in any form (but especially the Empire of Netheril and its plots), and the ability to keep secrets and use your common sense. You don't even have to be able to play a harp.

The principle benefits of membership in the Harpers are information, allies, and refuge. Many people in different parts of Faerûn are friendly to Those Who Harp, and they can help obtain information about local troublemakers, establish fake identities, provide safe hiding places, or relay messages for Harpers passing through the area. Player characters are under no formal chain of command. From time to time, they might be asked to take on specific missions, or look into trouble somewhere and take care of it. (Turn down too many missions, and after a while the Harpers look elsewhere for help.) But other than that, Harpers are expected to be guided by their own consciences and do what they can, where they can.

This epic destiny works best if your character becomes a member of the Harpers earlier in his or her career. If you have not yet established any such connection, your character might be drawn into this destiny by divine visitation—the deities who sponsor the Harpers might recognize in you the courage and compassion they need to serve their purposes, so they choose to bestow their gifts even if you have never met a Harper . . . although any epic hero so honored soon finds that the Harpers are interested in setting up a meeting.

Mythic Sovereign

You are the long-awaited monarch destined to lead your people into a glorious golden age. For a thousand years the stories will be told of how you came to be king.

Prerequisites: 21st level; fighter, paladin, ranger, or warlord

The history of Faerûn is illuminated by monarchs of legendary wisdom and prowess: Azoun of Cormyr, Gareth Dragonsbane of Damara, Tchazzar of Chessenta, and even Yamun Kahan of the Tuigan Horde. Uniters, protectors, champions, conquerors—each in turn carved his or her name into the ongoing story of the peoples of Faerûn and built a legend to endure the centuries.

A Mythic Sovereign can come to power in several ways. Some are born to royalty—the scions of existing dynasties. These sovereigns are often restorers who reverse the flagging fortunes of their homelands, defeat ancestral enemies, or usher in great ages

of expansion or prosperity. Some sovereigns are the founders of new dynasties, and they reestablish a strong and vital monarchy over a land suffering through turbulent times or they carve a new kingdom out of the wilderness. A few Mythic Sovereigns seize power by displacing a weak or evil monarchy and leading a nation to freedom. And finally a handful of Mythic Sovereigns win their thrones by acclaim when they are chosen by the people of their homelands to take up the mantle of leadership after performing deeds of renown and demonstrating great wisdom and courage.

In the days before a Mythic Sovereign ascends to the throne, he typically wins ever-growing renown throughout the land he is destined to rule. He might be an anonymous adventurer in other lands, but when he returns to his homeland, people crowd about to catch a glimpse of their hero. The great hero accrues accolades, honors, and even titles; the people begin to wonder whether he might someday become king (although in lands already ruled by weak or despotic monarchs, such speculation is dangerous). When threats arise, the people naturally turn to the famous hero to protect them. Whether the destined sovereign is noble-born or not, the wealthy and powerful of the land begin to seek the character's opinions and counsel, and treat the character as a peer—and then, as the character's destiny becomes apparent, as a lord.

A Ruler Already Exists

Just because a land is already under the rule of an established dynasty—for example, the Obarskyrs of Cormyr—you aren't necessarily barred from designating it your homeland. Who knows what fate might hold in the future? Your character might discover that she is a previously unknown heir to the throne—perhaps hidden with a different family when she was an infant. Some calamity might befall the existing rulers—assassination, a magical plague, a murderous revolution—leaving the door open for a new monarch to take the reins of power. Finally, characters who are ambitious enough might be usurpers themselves. Mythic Sovereigns include great tyrants as well as legendary defenders.

Lands in which a Mythic Sovereign is likely to arise include the following.

- *Amn:* The land's ruling Council of Five is corrupt. A powerful monarch could protect the common folk from the excesses of wealthy nobles.
- *The Dalelands:* Centuries ago Aencar the Mantled King briefly united the Dales. You could duplicate this feat, forging a kingdom from these independent lands.
- *Damara:* An evil king rules this land; you could defeat him and establish a benevolent monarchy.
- *Impiltur:* This once-great nation is in desperate need of a king to restore order and drive back the evil forces that have laid it in ruins.
- *Phalorm:* The Sword Coast has not been unified under a single crown in many long years. You could establish the realm of Phalorm in the Dessarin Vale once again.
- *Shanatar:* A dwarf hero might reforge the Mithral Kingdom of Iltkazar.
- *The Wealdath:* An elf hero could restore the realm of Myth Rhynn, uniting the scattered tribes of the vast forest into a vibrant, living elf kingdom once again.

Immortality

Upon completing your final quest, you ascend to the throne and begin your reign. For decades your land flourishes and your people prosper. Your victorious campaigns shield your land from invasion and bring your ancestral enemies to their knees. You might be a great lawgiver, a fearsome conqueror, or a famed peacemaker, but regardless of the character of your rule, you establish a great and powerful dynasty. Your descendants will mount the steps to your throne for centuries to come. When death comes for you at last, your tomb is a magnificent monument revered by all your people. Legends will say that you merely sleep and await the hour when your land needs you again.

Mythic Sovereign Features

All Mythic Sovereigns have the following class features.

Great Captain (21st level): Once per encounter when you score a critical hit, each ally within 10 squares of you can make a basic attack as a free action.

Homeland (21st level): With the DM's approval, choose a realm you are destined to rule. You are regarded as a great hero in that land. You gain a +4 bonus to any Charisma-based skill checks you make within that land. You have property or estates there sufficient to provide for all your ordinary needs, including the resources to maintain a household and a small force of loyal retainers in modest or opulent circumstances, as you like.

This Is Not My Fate (24th level): Once per day when you attempt a death saving throw, you can restore damage equal to your bloodied number, end all conditions affecting you, and stand up.

Sword of Kings (30th level): Choose one encounter power with the weapon keyword that you know. When you use that power, it is not expended unless you miss all targets.

Mythic Sovereign Power

Sword of Valor — Mythic Sovereign Utility 26

Your courageous example heartens your allies, steeling their resolve for victory.

Daily ✦ Martial
Free Action — **Close** burst 10
Trigger: You score a critical hit or you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points.
Target: Each ally in burst
Effect: The target gains temporary hit points equal to your level + your Charisma modifier and adds your Charisma modifier to attack rolls with basic and at-will attacks until the end of the encounter or until you are reduced to 0 hit points.

About the Author

Richard Baker is an award-winning game designer who has written scores of D&D adventures and supplements, including *Thunderspire Labyrinth*™, *King of the Trollhaunt Warrens*™, and *Manual of the Planes*™. Rich is also a bestselling author of Forgotten Realms novels, including *Swordmage*, the first book in the new *Blades of the Moonsea* series.

Ecology of the Genasi

by Rodney Thompson

illustrations by William O'Connor

"I might despair, to see the aimless way
Such lawless elements exert their sway.
Yet no despair shall my resolve benumb;
Here I might struggle, here might overcome!"

–Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust

"Nature that framed us of four elements, warring within our breasts for regiment, doth teach us all to have aspiring minds."

–Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine

Imagine for a moment that every day, when you awaken, the first thing you feel is the heartbeat of the world around you. Imagine that each day, as you go about your tasks, you feel the ebb and flow of the very elements. Imagine that the elements are so strongly a part of you that your body feels bonded to the world around you. Imagine that the most common elements of the world are not just ingrained into your very being, but are also yours to command and to bend to your will. Imagine that this power was not learned or given to you, but is merely a part of who you are, and that the most powerful forces from deep in the Elemental Chaos course through your veins and react to your whims. Imagine the feeling of having the wildest, most primitive energies at your fingertips, beckoning you to call upon them.

Imagine that your thoughts and emotions swirl within you like a tempest, and every day you struggle not only to control the latent power you possess but also to keep from being swept up in a torrent of chaos that threatens to wipe away any sense of discipline or resolve you might have. This constant give and take, the struggle between the raw, elemental power in your blood and the rational, logical part of your mind, is an ever-present reminder of your tumultuous nature. Imagine that every time an obstacle comes into your path, you must struggle not to smite it with fire, stomp it into the earth, or flee from it with the swiftness of wind or water.

This is what it means to be a genasi.

History

The true dawn of the genasi race has been long lost in the tumult of the ages, but stories abound regarding their origins. The most prominent origin story, and the one sages near and far believe is true, is that the genasi are the result of dalliances and pacts made between ancient humans and elemental beings such as efreets and genies. Long ago, human wizards known as sha'irs bound themselves to elemental beings with magic, bargaining with genies to gain the knowledge and wisdom those ancient elemental being possessed. After spending decades in such close proximity to their gens, these wizards became infused with elemental power, so much so that their own offspring were transformed by these elemental energies. Other humans engaged in more traditional unions with elemental creatures that had disguised themselves as humans, and eventually enough children of such unions were born to create a true breeding race, which would come to be known as the genasi. As a result, the genies, dao, djinn, and other humanoid elemental beings of the world are seen by genasi as distant cousins, even ancestors, and are afforded a greater degree of respect than other races offer.

A darker twist on the genasi origin tale, and one considered an insulting heresy by genasi, is that the genasi were created long ago by agents of the primordials. This tale, often whispered in dark corners by those who secretly revere the primordials, tells of human worshipers who were taken from their homes and twisted using elemental magic, creating men and women who could command the elements as easily as most humans eat or breathe. These new beings were meant to be the scions of the primordials and were commanded to go forth into the world and multiply. Adherents to this origin story believe that when the agents of the primordials created the genasi, they did so with the intention that the genasi would be the heirs to the world and would pave the way for a future where humans, elves, dwarves, and other races had been wiped out and replaced by the superior genasi race. This belief is widely held by heretics who worship the primordials and is not a tale genasi acknowledge.

Yet another tale tells of a brave band of human warriors, their names and identities long lost in the annals of time, who traveled to the Elemental Chaos to steal the primordials' power. Of the many who set out on this quest, only five survived to see it through to its end. The craftiest, most powerful, most cunning, and bravest of these heroes snatched the elemental power away from the primordials, in the process becoming forever changed. These five heroes became the progenitors of the genasi race, and each one embodied a different manifestation and became revered by those who believed this tale to be true. Their names have become common names in genasi society, and tales of their adventures are staples of genasi households.

Yet a fourth origin story declares that the genasi race originated in the depths of the Elemental Chaos. Like other origin tales, this one also has the genasi beginning as humans. These humans became trapped in the Elemental Chaos, living for years and raising their children on that dangerous plane. Over time, the offspring of these humans began to take on the qualities of the plane around them, absorbing the chaotic powers of the elements. Eventually, the descendants of those who originally became trapped on the Elemental Chaos made their way back to the world of their forefathers, where they became the first of the new genasi race.

Regardless of which one (if any) of these stories depicts the true origin of the genasi, over time the genasi went through a transition period where they passed from being half-breeds into a full-fledged race of beings with their own unique culture and physiology. This transitory period began when genasi of all different types began drifting together, forming small communities and living among their own kind. These settlements started small and remained small, since many of the early genasi were already well integrated into other societies by virtue of their ancestors. However, as more and more genasi began forming pocket communities, a true genasi culture took form.

While many races rose from small settlements to form vast Empires, like the tieflings' Bael Turath or the dragonborn empire, Arkhosia, the genasi never truly formed the alliances necessary to forge a vast, far-reaching civilization. At best, some of the genasi communities became thriving city-states, but the chaotic nature of the genasi made extending the authority of these city-states difficult. For example, the windsoul genasi are reluctant to take part in any sort of permanent establishment, while firesoul genasi have quick tempers that make it difficult to maintain long-term diplomatic relationships. Many of the genasi city-states crumbled as their inhabitants scattered to the four corners of the world, and others were taken over, either through hostility or through an influx of outsiders, by other races.

The recent history of the genasi people sees them integrating themselves into multicultural environments and thriving there. Possibly because genasi share so many traits with humans (indeed, there is a reason that all the genasi origin stories involve humans in the creation of their race), genasi fit in well alongside humans, and most human cities are also safe havens for genasi. Likewise, genasi with different manifestations have made themselves valuable members of other communities; earthsoul genasi, for example, commonly make their homes among the dwarves, who share their affinity for the stone and steel. In modern times, the genasi remain scattered, but they live in nearly any civilized settlement.

Physiology

Genasi resemble humans in many ways, but they have strong elemental features tied to their manifestation. Every genasi has a series of elemental lines etched into the skin from birth, and these lines glow with a color associated with the element they manifest. These energy lines, called *szuldar* in primordial, are unique to each genasi. Similarities can exist in the *szuldar* patterns between genasi of the same family, or even living in the same area due to intermingling bloodlines, and genasi speak of a "family resemblance" when comparing *szuldar*. For many genasi, one's *szuldar* are a point of pride, and many wear clothes designed to show off the *szuldar*. Some genasi are known to acquire tattoos designed to highlight or otherwise enhance their *szuldar*, and almost every genasi has an extremely sensitive understanding of even the subtlest variations in *szuldar*.

When a genasi is born, most of his *szuldar* are already fully formed in the patterns that remain for the rest of the genasi's life. Sometimes physical alterations to a genasi's body, such as scarring or intentional modification, can also alter the *szuldar* patterns, but this is a rarity. In fact, since genasi strongly identify their individuality with their *szuldar*, most see actual alterations to their *szuldar* as causing a loss of self-awareness, and avoid it. Some genasi, particularly those on the run from the law, have their *szuldar* altered by scarring or magical means to hide their true identities, but this is typically a last resort.

Though their origins are likely tied to a blending of bloodlines, genasi are a true breeding race that produces offspring that share their elemental traits. Genasi who produce children typically share at least one elemental manifestation, though rare exceptions to this rule exist. Likewise, the child's primary manifestation is a matter of genetics; if both parents share the same primary manifestation (or, if both parents have only one manifestation and they share the same one), chances are extremely high that the child has the same manifestation. In essence, firesoul genasi have firesoul genasi children. Heredity becomes a bit muddied when the parents are of mixed manifestations, or if a particular family has a mixture of different primary manifestations throughout the generations. Essentially, a genasi child's manifestation

Knowledge of the Genasi

Arcana

DC 15: Genasi are a race of humanoids who have been infused with great elemental power and affinity.

DC 20: A genasi manifests a single element from birth, which determines its appearance and the element with which it has an affinity.

DC 25: A genasi's elemental manifestation also grants special powers tied to that element. An Arcana check at this DC can also identify the racial power of a particular genasi elemental manifestation.

DC 30: Some genasi learn to manifest multiple elements, which grants them access to the powers tied to each element. A small number of genasi can even manifest two elements simultaneously.

Dungeoneering

DC 20: Abandoned genasi cities and settlements contain elemental traps. These traps are the remnants of security systems used by the genasi who inhabited the settlement.

DC 25: Most genasi-made traps can be bypassed through the application of elemental power or manifestation, which allows genasi with certain manifestations to avoid the trap entirely.

History

DC 20: The genasi have never had a major empire, but they did build several great city-states, most of which have fallen into ruin or been taken over by other races.

DC 25: Many of the genasi city-states were built in places favored by the manifestations of the population. Earthsoul genasi built city-states high in the mountains, while firesoul genasi built city-states in the deep desert.

Religion

DC 20: Genasi worship deities tied to their own primary manifestations. In general, stormsoul genasi worship Kord, watersoul genasi worship Melora, earthsoul genasi worship Moradin, and firesoul and windsoul genasi worship Pelor.

DC 25: Among cults dedicated to the primordials, genasi hold high-ranking positions and are among the most dedicated followers.

DC 30: Secret sects of Tharizdun worshipers exist in almost every settlement with a large number of genasi. Most genasi consider worship of Tharizdun to be heresy, but a few revere Tharizdun as the master of all things elemental.

is inherited from his or her ancestors, just as humans inherit hair and eye color or other physical traits.

Genasi children are born with a single manifestation that typically remains their primary and only manifestation through young adulthood. Since genasi of the same manifestation gravitate toward one another, genasi children spend a good deal of time around others with their same manifestation, and they develop their mastery of elemental powers through exposure to other genasi doing the same. Similarly, genasi children that are exposed to other manifestations are more likely to develop a second elemental manifestation. Though the relationship between a genasi child's upbringing and the ability to manifest a second element is not fully understood, scholars believe that proximity to alternate elemental manifestations is enough to trigger a second manifestation in a genasi. Likewise, genasi children that grow up in regions where the environment does not mirror their own elemental manifestation are highly likely to develop another manifestation later in life. For example, a watersoul genasi that grows up in a dwarven hold high in the mountains is likely to develop an earthsoul manifestation upon reaching adulthood. Developing a second manifestation does not occur until young adulthood, but some genasi adolescents have been known to manifest a second element early. Going through one's first shift between manifestations can be a harrowing experience for young genasi, since the transformation can come on suddenly and is typically physically uncomfortable, even painful.

For genasi, shifting between two elemental manifestations takes a physical toll, though a small one. The process of shifting manifestations is more than just a change of clothes; doing so is more like rebuilding oneself piece by piece out of new materials, and the result is feeling like having one's mind placed in an alien (if not unfamiliar) body. The change happens quickly, and genasi with multiple manifestations are so numbed to the physical trauma that changing manifestations is no more than a passing discomfort. It is no wonder that genasi with multiple manifestations develop multiple identities; such massive reconstruction of one's physical self can be horrifying the first time it is undergone.

A rare few genasi control their inner elemental turmoil and manifest multiple elements simultaneously. The genasi, known as tempests, are in a constant state of flux between two elements. These genasi embrace the chaos of elemental power within them, allowing it to wash over their bodies. In much the same way as genasi allow the elements to rebuild their bodies during the transition between two elements, these genasi tempests keep their bodies constantly changing—in part or in their entirety—between the elements they manifest. These genasi have a unique appearance, since their bodies appear to shift between two manifestations constantly. A genasi tempest's body flickers between elemental states, and they experience a constant physical strain of elemental flux—a feeling that they embrace.

New Genasi Heroic Feats

Any feat in this section is available to a genasi character who meets the prerequisites.

Genasi Fire Affinity [Genasi]

Prerequisite: Genasi

Benefit: If you have resistance to fire, increase that resistance by 2. Whenever a creature makes a saving throw to end ongoing fire damage from one of your powers, that creature gets -1 penalty to the roll.

Earthshock Master [Genasi]

Prerequisites: Genasi, earthsoul manifestation

Benefit: Your *earthshock* power deals 1d8 damage when it hits, and it gains the Reliable keyword.

Fast Manifestation [Genasi]

Prerequisites: Genasi, Extra Manifestation

Benefit: Once per day you can change your elemental manifestation as a minor action. If you have already used an encounter power associated with your elemental manifestation, you can still use the

encounter power associated with your newly changed elemental manifestation.

Firepulse Master [Genasi]

Prerequisites: Genasi, firesoul manifestation

Benefit: Your *firepulse* power gains the Reliable keyword and deals an extra 1d6 damage over its normal damage.

Genasi Frost Affinity [Genasi]

Prerequisite: Genasi

Benefit: If you have resistance to cold, increase that resistance by 3. You are immune to any slow and immobilize effects caused by cold powers.

Primordial Surge [Genasi]

Prerequisite: Genasi

Benefit: Whenever you successfully use a genasi racial power, you gain temporary hit points equal to 5 + your Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity modifier (your choice).

Psychology

The most important thing to understand about genasi is that their lives are dominated by the chaotic nature of their elemental aspect. A constant struggle takes place in the mind of a genasi, who must keep its chaotic urges in check—at least long enough to interact with members of other species. Even those genasi with the best self control are described as passionate by their comrades, since flashes of joy, anger, or sadness still break through even the most disciplined genasi exterior. There is no such thing as a true stone-faced genasi (though earthsoul genasi probably come the closest), and cracks appear in even the calmest genasi repose. Though it might seem like genasi are impulsive and prone to outbursts, the truth is that, with difficulty, most genasi control their inner turmoil enough so that they are no more chaotic than the average human.

Ambient Environmental Effects

One way Dungeon Masters can bring the elemental nature of the genasi to life is through the use of ambient environmental effects. A genasi is strongly tied to one or more of the primordial elements, and as a result their bodies sometimes warp the environment around them, particularly when the genasi is experiencing strong emotions. For example, when an earthsoul genasi is angry, the DM can describe the room as trembling slightly—just enough that the player characters are aware of it, as the earth rumbles beneath the genasi's feet. A firesoul genasi might raise the temperature in the room by a few degrees as he makes a passionate plea for assistance from a local lord, while thunder might rumble or lightning might flash when a stormsoul genasi is troubled. A thin mist might precede a watersoul genasi as she enters a room where she fears danger might wait, and a slight breeze could accompany the righteous wrath of a windsoul genasi cleric who rebukes the forces of evil. These ambient environmental effects shouldn't have any mechanical benefit, but could serve as ways to flavorfully describe the elements bowing to the chaotic emotions of genasi player characters and NPCs.

Genasi philosophers believe that, regardless of the truth behind their race's origins, the genasi people came into being out of a cosmic sense of balance. These philosophers believe that the genasi people serve as the fulcrum on which the balance between the chaos of the primordials and the order of the mortal races rests. According to this philosophy, the genasi race came into existence when forces beyond the gods or the primordials—believed by many to be Fate, or something akin to it—deemed that the world and all the planes needed something to serve as an intermediate point between raw Elemental Chaos and the law of divine creation. As a result, this philosophy, which is embraced by many genasi, organizes them into two distinct camps: those who embrace their role as a tamer of chaos, and those who believe that they were created to break free of the shackles of order.

The genasi that believe that the genasi race was meant to tame chaos strive to do so first within themselves and then in the world around them. These genasi are among the most lawful, ordered beings, and they work hard to fit in among the other mortal races, to whom they feel more attached. After all, they reason, the genasi were meant to be brothers to the mortal races, those races created by divine beings, who could transform the chaos into order. These genasi discipline themselves and keep their emotions in check—they do not allow their passions to rule their minds. That accomplished, genasi of this philosophy then turn their attention to the world around them, seeking to maintain order and stamp out lawlessness. However, this philosophy, while lending itself well to civilization, does not always equate to goodness. Many genasi tyrants have embraced these same philosophies, and they took it upon themselves to impose order at the point of a sword. It is no surprise that genasi who believe in this philosophy join militaries or law enforcement organizations, such as town guards of night watches.

On the other hand, those genasi who see themselves as chaos made flesh take a decidedly different approach. They embrace their emotions and have no compunctions about letting their passions dictate their course of action. These genasi see their role in the world as the breakers of chains (namely, the chains of law), and they believe that their elemental infusion is a gift, given to them by the primordials or other cosmic forces, so that they can show the other races of the world that chaos can liberate. These genasi are wild, passionate, and excitable, but not necessarily evil. Genasi who embrace this philosophy lead rebellions against tyrants, steal from the wealthy to help the poverty-stricken, and follow their passions wherever they might lead.

One trait that all genasi share, regardless of their level of self-discipline, is a strong sense of ambition. Genasi have an inherent desire to better themselves, or at least improve their station in life. They might do so through the pursuit of power, or by earning the respect of their peers, but nearly all genasi have great dreams and aspirations. Genasi chase their dreams with gusto, and though patience isn't their strong suit, genasi can put years of work into the pursuit of an individual goal. The passionate nature of the genasi keeps them pursuing their goals long after other, less dedicated races would have given up.

Genasi are passionate beings, which is a result of the surging elemental turmoil present in the fiber of their very being. Even those genasi who have a strong sense of discipline are susceptible to strong emotions. They rage with more anger, they love with more passion, and they mourn with more sorrow than any other race. Though genasi might keep a tight rein on their emotions, once they allow their feelings to show, there can be no question of their strength. Genasi clerics thunder with righteous wrath, while genasi rogues revel in the chaos they sow with maddened glee. Regardless of their chosen profession, their passions reach the highest peaks and the lowest valleys, many times within the span of a single day.

Genasi are surprisingly good at adapting, for all their strong emotions might make them passionate about their own ways. Most genasi embrace change, either as an inevitability (spawned by the swirling chaos of existence) or as a natural part of existence to be welcomed and celebrated. Change, in their personal lives or in the wider world, brings about new experiences, new opportunities, and new allies. With the ambitious nature of the genasi, every new opportunity could be a means of growing one step closer to achieving one's goals. In many respects, genasi are among the most flexible races when it comes to accepting the changes that their lives have undergone. Genasi bend with the breeze, but they do not break, and they can adapt to almost any course of events that their lives take.

Just as a genasi's elemental manifestation is an important part of its physiology, it is also a major component to its psychology. All genasi have a primary manifestation from birth, and it is this manifestation that defines the genasi's basic personality. Most genasi identify themselves, the very essence of their beings, by their primary manifestation. Even if a genasi learns to manifest other elements, its primary manifestation is at the very core of who it is as a person. Humans and other races would call this their identity, but for the genasi the personality defined by their primary manifestation is so much more: It is a touchstone that the genasi uses to maintain the integrity of its true self.

Likewise, genasi that learn to manifest multiple elements might also develop multiple personalities, each one associated with a different manifestation. These personalities are not completely distinct from one another (unlike those developed by humans with mental illnesses), but rather are radically different aspects of the genasi's primary identity. A genasi with multiple manifestations effectively has strong personality traits that come to the surface when a particular element is manifested. A genasi who is manifesting one element might behave completely differently when manifesting another, though the same knowledge remains through both manifestations. Similarly, a genasi might change its manifestation to better match or express its mood, physically reflecting the emotions it feels at the time.

The rare genasi tempest that manifests multiple elements simultaneously also has two strong personalities struggling for control at once. These genasi can be called mercurial at best, since they switch between strong emotions at the opposite ends of the spectrum in the blink of an eye. A genasi tempest manifesting two elements might seem somewhat schizophrenic at first glance, even talking to itself as its manifestations war for control of its psyche, though in truth these genasi are no more unstable than anyone under great stress or strain.

Though it might seem like genasi families would be prone to breaking apart when passions run hot, in truth genasi parents are monogamous and remain so for most of their lives. Perhaps because the relationships between genasi rarely lose their spark or become boring, genasi have large families with many children, and in turn have large extended families with dozens of aunts, uncles, and cousins. The fact that genasi refer to other genasi as "brother" or "cousin" is more than just a colloquialism—there is a chance that the person they are talking to is, in fact, a distant relation.

The following section includes notes about the general personality traits of different genasi elemental manifestations. These personality traits are commonly seen in genasi manifesting the related element, though exceptions exist even within these common personality manifestations.

Earthsoul Genasi

Earthsoul genasi are frequently stubborn and immovable. They are strong like they mountains and they know it. Earthsoul genasi also are proud and confident, and sometimes this spills over into vanity. Coupled with the inherent genasi ambition, many earthsoul genasi bend their strength into domination—physical or otherwise—of their enemies. Of all the genasi elemental manifestations, earthsoul genasi come the closest to possessing patience and engaging in contemplation. However, the true strength of all earthsoul genasi becomes visible when someone tries to push them in a direction they do not want to go. When this happens, earthsoul genasi resist with the might of the stone and the earth, and they knock down anyone that stands in the way.

Firesoul Genasi

Of all the genasi manifestations, firesoul genasi embody the passionate nature of their race the best. Firesoul genasi are the most aggressive, most impulsive, and the easiest to anger. Among all the genasi manifestations, they are the most in tune with the raw power of their elemental heritage. Firesoul genasi feels the raw energy at their fingertips and are among the most eager to use it. They are highly competitive as well, since they constantly seek a productive outlet for their passions. The tempers of firesoul genasi burn hot, but also fast, and once the heat of the moment has passed, they are just as likely to jump from rage to elation in a matter of seconds.

Stormsoul Genasi

Wild and powerful as a sudden thunderstorm, stormsoul genasi are of the same mercurial nature as all genasi, but while they can be slower to rouse, they can be a far more terrible sight to behold. Stormsoul genasi lash out at those that trouble them, like a lightning strike that is accompanied by a roar of thunder. Stormsoul genasi are prone to brooding, but when the storm of their emotions rolls in, nobody can do much to stop it. Unlike firesoul genasi, stormsoul genasi can control themselves under great duress for long periods of time, but when they reach their breaking point, they snap and strike with sudden ferocity. Stormsoul genasi in the grip of their own emotions can be extremely unpredictable, since once they reach the point of unleashing their rage, they must do so until their wrath has run its course.

Watersoul Genasi

Watersoul genasi are strongly independent and determined to make their way on their own. Watersoul manifesters, feeling close ties to rivers and oceans, see themselves as possessing the same deep strength as those great bodies of water. In many ways, watersoul genasi can be recalcitrant, preferring to remain as untamed as the rushing river. Watersoul genasi have much of the same pride as earthsoul genasi, which manifests itself in a kind of fearlessness unmatched among others of their race. Since they can live both on land and beneath the sea, they have a strong sense of superiority; after all, they can go places where no other members of their own race can go, so they feel empowered by the ability to determine their own path in life.

Windsoul Genasi

Quick of speech and of gait, windsoul genasi are prone to flights of fancy and rapid changes in mood. They drift from one emotion to the next, though most have an air of carelessness about them. Windsoul genasi embody the genasi passion by quickly latching onto emotions and riding them for a short time, then just as quickly abandoning them. Windsoul genasi don't form strong attachments, at least not without great reason, and as a result windsoul genasi are seen as loners and drifters. Likewise, windsoul genasi are among the most adaptive, and they can take whatever comes their way with aplomb.

Culture

Genasi are one of the most culturally diverse races—perhaps second only to humans. Owing to the fact that they integrate well into other societies, genasi culture is a melting pot of traditions drawn from those of many other races. Despite their ability to adapt to the customs of other races, genasi have developed unique practices of their own as well. The strong passions of the genasi people have made their culture vibrant and dynamic, and life in genasi society is compared to an ever-changing tapestry woven of the brightest threads.

Society

Genasi society is nearly as tumultuous as the genasi themselves. The strong sense of ambition fostered by the genasi leads to a constant struggle between those in power and those seeking power. Likewise, one's social status is far from static; the genasi have no real concept of a social class that cannot be transcended, and few genasi would even understand the meaning of "knowing one's place." Indeed, the genasi are constantly rising and falling in social status, and where a genasi might be a revered member of the community one week, he might be forgotten the next as another genasi's star is on the rise. As a result, few genasi look down upon any other being based on social standing, since the beggar you shun one day might be the governor of the town mere months later—at least in the genasi view.

Genasi have no concept of nobility or hereditary leadership, at least not of their own. They might adopt these concepts when blending into other societies,

but left to their own devices the genasi people do not divide themselves into social classes. There are only genasi on the rise, and genasi falling out of favor. The genasi do not believe in divine right, royal or noble bloodlines, or any transference of prestige from parents to offspring. Each genasi must achieve its goals on its own merits, and competition between genasi is fierce. Although this creates a somewhat level playing field as far as social prestige is concerned, the end result is that genasi society is like a constantly bubbling vat, where the entire social structure churns and boils, and can be radically different from one week to the next.

Since genasi society is so mutable, genasi truly believe (and rightly so) that no matter their current situation things change eventually. Genasi find it difficult to feel downtrodden in its society when fate has brought ill fortune, since it truly is only a matter of time before it can once again be in the limelight. Likewise, wealthy and powerful genasi are rarely as callous and unaware of the repercussions of their actions as human nobles can be, and though their fiery nature can lead them to be capricious and even hedonistic, they never forget that all their stature could be brought crashing down the next moment.

Family

A genasi's family holds a very important place. Because it can be difficult for a genasi to form bonds with others without a great deal of time and effort, the genasi family is regarded as one of the few groups where a genasi can establish true life-long bonds. Though genasi families share the same problems and issues as families in other races, it is far rarer that genasi offspring become truly estranged from their parents. For genasi, family might be the only other people that they can rely on to understand them. Even the bitterest feuds might lead to only a temporary separation, and even when family members are spread to the four corners of the world, they still look forward to their reunion.

In most cases, genasi children are raised by family members who share an elemental manifestation with the child. However, genasi parents go out of their way to make sure their children spend time with genasi of other manifestations, so that they gain a greater appreciation for the differences between members of their own race. This is particularly prevalent when members of the genasi's family have different primary manifestations; in some cases, genasi children go to live with relatives with other manifestations for weeks or months at a time, in the hopes that the child can come to respect those genasi who are different. In families with multiple manifestations, parents see the exposure of their children to multiple manifestations as being of utmost importance.

Manifestations

For the genasi, their elemental manifestation is central to the fiber of their being. Culturally, genasi of different manifestations are not very different, much like humans of different temperaments still share most cultural trappings. However, a genasi's manifestation is as important to it as its religion or profession, if not more so. Though genasi respect the differences between members of their race, when confronted with prejudice against their manifestation, they anger quickly. Anyone who discriminates against a genasi due to its elemental manifestation might find the full force of an enraged genasi confronting him or her, since insults to a manifestation are the most offensive anyone can make. Genasi are proud of their manifestations, but also sensitive, and they can be very touchy about the subject unless it is breached with care.

Magic

As beings of great elemental power, genasi favor elemental magic as well. Genasi wizards are common, and when studying the ways of the arcane, genasi wizards research spells that are tied somehow to their elemental manifestations. Since the genasi have a built-in affinity for certain elements, they also have greater control over elemental magic and bend such spells to their will. When a genasi lashes out with elemental magic, most beings know to stay out of the way.

Though the excitable nature of the genasi makes it difficult for them to maintain the discipline of wizardly life, what they lack in control they make up for in natural accuracy. Genasi spellcasters harness raw power through strength of will and not through any sense of finesse or study. However, since the genasi knowledge of elemental forces is so great, other wizards value the insight of genasi spellcasters since they can see things that wizards of other races would never be aware of.

Religion

Genasi favor deities that share elements of their portfolio with the genasi's primary manifestation. Genasi with multiple manifestations might also be prone to calling upon multiple deities when in need, depending on the current manifestation they have. Regardless, genasi feel comforted knowing that something that is so integral to their very being is under the watchful eye of a powerful deity. Particularly religious genasi feel the hand of the divine guiding their actions, believing that, more so than any other race, they are intimately connected to the divine by the elements in the gods' portfolios.

Most genasi have small shrines to their gods in their homes, and they do not attend religious services at larger temples. Genasi tend to worship whenever the mood strikes them, which rarely conforms to the

more rigid schedules of worship held in organized temples. Genasi are rarely fond of formal ceremonies and rituals, instead preferring to confer their worship on their chosen gods at their own pace and in their own way. Genasi independence is present even in their religious practices, which, like the genasi themselves, are full of passionate belief and a willingness to embrace change.

The Primordials

A controversial subject among the genasi is that of the primordials. The ancient elemental beings known as the primordials are rivals to the gods themselves, and many genasi are well aware of this fact. Some genasi revere the primordials as though they were gods, conferring worship upon them in secret. These genasi believe that they were created to serve the primordials and spread chaos, and, as a result, this reverence for elemental forces takes the place of religion in their lives. Particularly zealous followers of this belief even seek to make pacts with beings of Elemental Chaos to bring themselves one step closer to the primordials.

Worse yet, a few misguided souls even seek out the Elder Elemental Eye, Tharizdun. These genasi are typically among the most evil and chaotic of their race, and some would argue insane, since they seek the means to free Tharizdun and unleash his destructive power upon the world. These misguided genasi think that Tharizdun placed them on the world, and that they were created when the Chained God strained against his restraints long enough to touch the world. They believe that the genasi race is a remnant of his awesome power, and that they were created at the moment he touched the world with the intent that they become his liberators.

At the same time, genasi see the primordials as beings of great evil and destructive power. These genasi revile the primordials, believing that the conflict within themselves (that between Elemental Chaos and mortal order) embodies a great struggle in the universe. Since the genasi are mortal, they place themselves on the opposite side of the struggle from the primordials. These genasi believe that it is the duty of the genasi to harness the power of chaos and tame its destructive power, while the primordials continue to try to tear down these good works.

Art

Genasi art is nothing if not exciting. Genasi crafts embody the wild, untamed nature of the genasi soul, and even the simplest or most practical items (like furniture) look as though they were merely snatched out of the Elemental Chaos whole. Genasi art uses bright, vibrant colors that express a wide range of emotions, and carvings and sculptures feature swirling or bursting patterns that resemble surges of power or even explosions. For more functional items, such as weapons, genasi artisans like to make their mark with swirling color patterns, bright gems, and elaborate carvings that give the surface of weapons and armor a flamboyant feel.

Most genasi artists see their craft as a means of gaining prestige in society. Likewise, genasi artisans want nothing more than to be in high demand, so most work hard not only to please their own sensibilities but also to please their intended audience. For example, though genasi blacksmiths might not be as skilled as dwarves when it comes to creating swords, they go to great lengths to tailor the swords to the person who plans to wield it. As a result, genasi weapons are intended for use by a specific individual, and they can sometimes seem unwieldy in the hands of others.

Leisure

Genasi love athletics and games of all kinds, thanks to their competitive nature. Most genasi see leisure time as just another opportunity to improve their standing in the eyes of their peers. Genasi prefer to remain extremely active during their leisure time, which allows them an outlet for their wilder urges and impulses. Festivals and celebrations in genasi communities are frequently marked by footraces, feats of strength, and other physical competitions.

Team athletics are somewhat more rare (mostly due to the fact that genasi teammates turn on one another when the pressure is on), though genasi find themselves quite at home in gladiatorial competitions and the like. In fact, many genasi actively pursue careers in the gladiator arena because it gives them a chance to vent their frustrations and bask in the adoration of others, all at the same time. Gladiatorial events play both to the genasi's pride and their uncontrollable nature, making for an excellent spectacle.

Enemies and Allies

Despite their unpredictable nature, genasi work rather well with most races, especially humans. Genasi and humans share a number of common traits, including strong emotions and a sense of ambition, and any race that mixes well with humans is also likely to mix well with genasi. Elves and eladrin are uncomfortable around genasi, since their more reserved, measured perspective on life does not mix well with the genasi's impulsiveness.

With no inherent racial conflicts, the genasi can make allies anywhere they go, depending on the degree of control they keep over their more chaotic urges. However, when genasi make enemies, their rivalry forms quickly and burns hot. Genasi show their enemies none of the discretion they offer their allies, and they are not afraid to unleash their full potential on someone who has crossed them. Though genasi try to abide by the laws of the land, many genasi cannot restrain themselves from incinerating their enemies, which sometimes put the genasi in conflict with the authorities even if the killing was done in self-defense. A genasi enemy is likely to be ruthless and aggressive, two traits that combine to make genasi extremely dangerous.

Most genasi see themselves as related, if only distantly, to beings of elemental power and origin. They are inclined to show respect, if not reverence, to elemental creatures that they deal with, unless that creature is overtly hostile to the genasi. When encountering beings of great elemental power, genasi go out of their way to try to make peace with, or even make allies of, these beings in the hopes of fostering the bond between two creatures of the elements.

Encounters

Genasi are aggressive and, in combat, violent without reservation. They call upon elemental power when dealing with enemies, and they prefer to use elements associated with their manifestation when possible.

Genasi Flamechaser

The genasi flamechaser is a firesoul genasi that has mastered the ability to create and manipulate fire. It needs no weapons since it creates them from pure flame.

Genasi Flamechaser **Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 61; Bloodied 30
AC 18; Fortitude 19, Reflex 18, Will 18
Speed 6

Dagger of Flame (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
+10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 fire damage.

Fire Bolt (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 20; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 fire damage.

Firepulse (immediate reaction; when hit by a melee attack; encounter) ✦ **Fire**
+13 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 fire damage.

Explosive Burst (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 4 fire damage, and the genasi flamechaser makes a secondary attack against each creature adjacent to the target. Secondary Attack: +11 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 fire damage.

Lingering Flameburst (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 4 fire damage, and any creature that starts its turn adjacent to the target takes 5 fire damage (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Primordial
Skills Perception +8

Str 14 (+5)	**Dex** 16 (+6)	**Wis** 11 (+3)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 11 (+3)	**Cha** 16 (+6)

Genasi Flamechaser Tactics

The genasi flamechaser opens combat with its *explosive burst* or *lingering flameburst* powers, depending on whether their targets are clustered close together. From there, the flamechaser attempts to stay back, lobbing *fire bolts* and *explosive bursts* (if it recharges), only resorting to *firepulse* if enemies move in too close.

Genasi Stormmaster

A genasi stormmaster is a stormsoul genasi that combines swordplay with a mastery of thunder and lightning. The stormmaster sweeps across the battlefield like a maelstrom.

Genasi Stormmaster	Level 9 Controller
Medium natural humanoid	XP 400
Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7	
HP 97; **Bloodied** 48	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21	
Speed 6	
(+) **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.	
⚕ **Storm Sword** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Lightning, Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 lightning damage, and slide the target 5 squares. At the end of the slide, enemies adjacent to the target take 1d8 + 5 lightning damage.	
✲ **Wrath of the Thunderstorm** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Lightning**	
Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 8 lightning damage the target slides 3 squares.	
Promise of Storm (minor; encounter) ✦ Lightning, Thunder	
Personal; until the end of its next turn, the genasi stormmaster deals an extra 1d8 damage with a lightning or thunder power it uses.	
Thunderclap Rebuke (immediate interrupt; when hit by a melee attack; encounter)	
The attacking creature is pushed 5 squares.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial	
Skills Arcana +14	
Str 10 (+4) **Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+7)	
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 21 (+9) **Cha** 13 (+5)	
Equipment longsword	

Genasi Stormmaster Tactics

The genasi stormmaster is a melee combatant who uses its sword to enhance its controller abilities. The stormmaster approaches its enemies, opening the combat with the *storm sword* power. If distant enemies are on the battlefield, the stormmaster uses its *wrath of the thunderstorm* to move enemies into position for further attacks.

Genasi Tempest

A genasi tempest has learned to manifest two elements at once. This particular tempest has a dual manifestation of earth and water.

Genasi Tempest	Level 8 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 89; **Bloodied** 44	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20	
Speed 6	
(+) **Rapier** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.	
⚕ **Rush of the River** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the genasi tempest can shift up to 2 squares before or after making this attack.	
✧ **Earthshock** (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 2; affects one creature in burst that is touching the ground; +13 vs. Fortitude; target is knocked prone.	
✧ **Thundering Earth** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Thunder**	
Close blast 3; +11 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 4 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.	
Pity is for the Weak	
The genasi tempest deals an extra 2d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.	
Swiftcurrent (move; encounter)	
The genasi tempest shifts up to 6 squares over ground or liquid terrain, taking no penalties for squeezing. The genasi tempest can move through enemy spaces, ignore difficult terrain, and take no damage if the surface it moves across would normally deal damage to it.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial	
Skills Acrobatics +14	
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 20 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+5)	
Con 17 (+7) **Int** 12 (+5) **Cha** 17 (+7)	
Equipment leather armor, rapier	

Genasi Tempest Tactics

A genasi tempest tries to gain combat advantage when possible. If it cannot flank its targets, the genasi tempest uses its *earthshock* power to knock a target prone, and then uses *rush of the river* to approach the target and strike, or (if the target is more than 2 squares away) uses *swiftcurrent* to cross the battlefield safely as a move action before making its attack.

Encounter Group

The following is a sample group of genasi cultists of Tharizdun. It represents a small cell of cultists that might operate in any small town or city, including the stormmaster leader of the cultists, his tempest followers, and an elemental emissary from their hidden masters (a bloodfire harpy).

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,850)

- ✦ 1 genasi stormmaster (level 9 controller)
- ✦ 1 bloodfire harpy (level 9 soldier)
- ✦ 2 genasi tempests (level 8 skirmisher)
- ✦ 2 genasi flamechasers (level 6 artillery)

About the Author

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Deep in the tunnels under an ancient ziggurat, an adventurer pulls a sleek, gem-encrusted sword from a pile of glittering treasure. As she lifts the sword up, she hears a voice. She drops the blade in shock, and the blade continues to speak, relating the tales of its previous adventures, and how it ended up in this lonely hoard . . .

Intelligent Items

by Logan Bonner ♦ illustrations by Jason A. Engle and David Griffith

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A magic item with a will and personality of its own is called an intelligent item. Through a powerful, unknown ritual or bizarre twist of fate, an item might trap a creature's mind or become sentient over time. These items are scattered throughout the world, usually possessed by their creators or lost to history, only to be found by intrepid (or lucky) explorers.

Introducing an intelligent item to your game is much like adding an NPC, and they can serve many of the same functions (though the item doesn't provide another swordarm on the battlefield). This article will give you some ideas for ways to help out your PCs with intelligent items, and how to develop a personality that is interesting and unique.

If you want your PCs to find an intelligent item, you should create it yourself or use one of the samples. It's very difficult to imbue the spark of sentience in an intelligent item, and a PC should make one only at high level, and then only with your permission.

Intelligent Item or Artifact?

In many ways, artifacts are similar to intelligent items. They both possess a spark of sentience and have their own personalities. So how do you figure out when to use an artifact and when to use an intelligent item?

Artifacts can be incredibly important in a campaign, and they have strong desires and agendas. If a player character has an artifact, that artifact isn't really under the PC's control—it has a strong will of its own. If you need a centerpiece to wrap the events of your campaign around, use an artifact.

Intelligent items are less significant. They don't have powers like artifacts do, so you don't need to closely monitor the power level of an intelligent item. You can use an intelligent item to give subtle hints or to serve as a sort of mentor. An intelligent item is more like a character's sidekick than a powerful force in its own right. If you just want to give a PC sword that talks, use an intelligent item.

Why Use Intelligent Items?

There are two reasons to introduce intelligent items in your game. One is to use them as plot devices and have them convey information like an NPC would.

The other reason is to engage a player who likes having a buddy. Players who like familiars and animal companions might like intelligent items, too. An object can work better for a martial character, or anyone who might feel silly having an animal following along during combat. The storyteller is the ideal player type to give an intelligent item to. If you've got one in your group, consider dropping an intelligent item of a type that the player wants to carry.

Creating an Intelligent Item

There are five steps to create an intelligent item:

- Choose a **persona** for the item.
- Choose the base magic item.
- Choose the **senses** that the item possesses.
- Choose how the item **communicates.**
- Add bonuses to **skills** (optional).

Persona

Start off by determining an item's persona, since that's what makes the item interesting. The personality and mannerism guidelines from the *Player's Handbook* (pages 23–24) and the random NPC mannerisms and quirks from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 186) are good tools for developing an intelligent item's persona.

Alignment: An item is usually aligned like the person who created it. It might have conflicts with a wielder of a different alignment. Most items are unaligned.

Deities: Unless created by a divine crafter, items don't usually worship deities. Items that decide on their own to worship deities gravitate toward Corellon, Ioun, or Moradin. Items that carry the trapped consciousness of a creature usually worship whoever that creature worshiped in life.

Personality: The questions in the *Player's Handbook* can guide you in creating a personality. You might instead choose an archetype. An intelligent item might be motherly, childlike, or sadistic. Keep your players in mind, and make the item's personal ity fit in with some of them and conflict a bit with others, just like a party member's personality would.

INTELLIGENT ITEM QUIRKS

d20	Detail
1	Old owner cut a notch after killing a monster.
2	Condensation forms when the item is nervous.
3	Repainted many times to conceal appearance.
4	Scorched after encounter with a fire monster.
5	Illusory rust forms when item is bored.
6	Image of a face engraved into it.
7	Twitches when it wants you to do something.
8	Changes color to blend with its environment.
9	An eye sometimes opens and looks around.
10	When set on ground, plants grow in its place.
11	Pattern forms on wielder/wearer's skin.
12	Always looks like shadows are passing over it.
13	Shows illusory image of last person you killed.
14	When wielder misses, item changes color.
15	Always stays the same temperature.
16	Adorned with bones of small animals.
17	Causes a brief prickly sensation when picked up.
18	Item's shadow is an odd color.
19	Is one color at day and another at night.
20	Has an insignia that indicates its origin.

Mannerisms: Choose a few quirky speech patterns or phobias for the item. If the item has a catchphrase or is scared of goblins, it is more memorable.

Appearance: The design and condition of the item can tell a lot about its history. Wear and tear can show that the item has been used heavily, and its

construction and style can show whether it's elven, human, dwarven, and so on. The following table has random quirks to help you.

Background: Decide who created the item, where it was made, and when. It gives the item a weightier history. The item can name-drop the great heroes who once carried it and the fantastic places it has been. It can make the wielder feel like part of that great tradition . . . or berate him for not saving the world like they did in the good old days.

Speech (Default): Most items can speak aloud. Assign one to three languages. If the item has multiple languages, consider giving it languages no one in the party has, so it can translate or communicate with creatures the party can't.

Touch Telepathy: The wielder and this item can communicate mentally. The two do not need to speak the same language to understand one another. This can let them communicate in secret, but the item should probably still have speed, too.

You can add some skill check bonuses to make your item useful, to help flesh out plot hooks, and give the item more of a backstory.

Base Magic Item

Choose any magic item of a level appropriate to your PC's. It can be an item you think works well with the item's personality, or an item you know a PC wants. Try to match up the PC and item's personalities for a good fit or a fun tension.

The magic item has all the normal properties and powers of a magic item of that type.

Senses

Items sense the environment around them just like characters do. However, they don't have Perception bonuses. Usually, the item perceives whatever its wielder does, but you can have the item notice something if it's useful to your story.

Communication

Choose any number of communication modes (usually 2–3) an intelligent item possesses.

Full Telepathy: The item can communicate mentally with anyone nearby (usually within 20 squares of it). The beings do not have to share a language. This is a good way to make an item seem powerful or to allow secret communication by an entire party. Use this sparingly.

Glyphic: Using symbols or images, this item can relay messages. This is nice scenery for an item, but an item with only this mode isn't that useful as an NPC. Like touch telepathy, it can be useful if the item likes to speak to its wielder in secret. Glyphic communication comes in the form of glowing runes that appear across the surface of the item. Some items use full, readable script, and others cryptic symbols.

Skill Modifiers

You can add some skill check bonuses to make your item useful, to help flesh out plot hooks, and give the item more of a backstory. An item doesn't need these; they're entirely optional.

Drawing Interest

One of the tricks to making intelligent items successful is tying them to your PC's story. Here are some hooks that can involve PCs.

- The item holds the mind of someone close to the PC, such as an ancestor or mentor.
- The item has a similar personality to a PC. If the PC is one who doesn't always get along with the rest of the party, the item agrees with that PC and thinks his or her plans are brilliant, even if everybody else knows better. The item and PC finish each others' sentences, have the same maniacal laugh, and can't stand to be apart.
- The PC and item share a similar goal. If the PC vowed revenge on the minions of Demogorgon, include an intelligent item with a similar hatred.
- The mechanical benefits appeal to the PC or perhaps it is a higher level than the PC's other items. This is perhaps the bluntest approach, but if the item helps the PC achieve good results in combat, the PC will want to keep it around. This also helps keep "odd couple" pairings together, when the PC and item have personalities that clash a bit.

Narrow Categories: Bonuses to skill checks cover narrow fields of expertise, usually related to the item's history or to a type of creature with which the item is closely associated. For example, an item that was created in the empire of Bael Turath and has a tiefling's personality might give bonuses to skill checks related to that empire and to the tiefling race. Don't give out a flat bonus to a skill! An item shouldn't give +2 bonus to Perception at all times, for instance (unless that's part of the magic item the intelligence is within, of course).

Not Tied to Specific Skills: You don't have to say a bonus applies only to History checks. In the example above, the item might give a bonus to Nature checks to forage near ruins of Bael Turath or Perception to notice architectural decorations made during that empire's rule.

+2 Bonus: Mechanically, act like the item is using the aid another action, giving a +2 bonus to the check. If the skill check is related something the item knows all about, like its previous owner, don't bother making a check. The item just tells what it knows.

Intelligent Items in Play

Once the players "meet" an intelligent item, they'll be dealing with another personality in the party.

Assisting the PCs

The effect the item has on play can be based on the item's personality. Balance the different purposes of items based on how you want the item to behave and the purpose it can serve for you in running the game.

An intelligent item might have been "alive" longer than the players. It could have been sitting in a treasure hoard for centuries. There are many things it knows more about than the PCs do.

Drop Plot Points: The item, especially when it's first introduced, can provide adventure hooks. It might talk about how its owner lived in a town in a location the PCs believe is entirely barren, hinting at a lost adventure site. The item might also have a rightful owner, and the PCs can have a quest to return the item.

Give Advice: You can use the item to feed the players information or remind them of details. If your players gloss over the name of an NPC they meet, the item might say, "Barlon? Isn't that the guy the king's guard was looking for?" When the fighter pulls out a flaming axe, his intelligent amulet might say, "Are you crazy? That's a red dragon! Put those damn flames out!"

Give Skill Modifiers: The skill modifiers you gave the intelligent items can assist the PCs in certain circumstances.

Don't Overdo It: It's fine to use an intelligent item to assist the PCs once in a while, but don't treat it like it's your character, and don't let it steal the spotlight. An intelligent magic item should only help out once or twice per game session, and PCs shouldn't come to rely on its help.

Item Attitude

An intelligent item should be helpful to PCs, but this doesn't mean every item has a good attitude. One might be like a happy dog, always willing to assist its master, but another item could assist only grudgingly because what the PCs are doing helps it travel to a place it needs to go.

Angry Items: Intelligent items should be fun for players, so only rarely should an item work against them. If it does, it might make noise when the PCs are trying to be stealthy, or refuse to help with skill checks. You can use an item's attitude to indicate courses of action that are dangerous to the PCs, but let them decide for themselves whether to take that course of action or not. The item will get over it (or be picked up by whoever finds the bodies). If an item causes too much grief for the PCs, it's going to once again be left in a dank dungeon to sit for the next fools who wander in.

Introducing Items

When you plan to bring in an intelligent item, first consider how you want the PCs to find it. You could place it in a treasure hoard (as part of the standard treasure—you don't need to adjust its gp value), have it given or lent to the party by an important NPC, or, rarely, let a PC create it.

PCs can identify an intelligent item quickly. Intelligent items can recognize powerful adventurers, and communicate with them.

Consider in advance which PC you expect to have the item most of the time. See the Drawing Interest sidebar for advice on this.

Decide whether you want this to be an item the party has for a long time or one that lasts for just one adventure. If it's the latter, give the item an agenda that takes it away from the PCs. It should be clear that the item is intent on this task, so the PCs should only accept the item if they're willing to take it on. This is one instance where the item might refuse to operate, so let your players know that in advance. Consider making the item a little more powerful when it's fully active, since it's more temperamental. You can make the item about as powerful as a similar item the PCs receive permanently at the end of the adventure. For example, if you give an intelligent 17th-level item to a 12th-level party, that can be exciting, but they'll be high enough in level by the end of the adventure that they can find a good replacement.

Disenchanting

An intelligent item can't be disenchanted and turned into residuum like other magic items can, but it can be transformed into another item in the same category using the Transfer Enchantment ritual (*Adventurer's Vault*, page 199).

The PCs normally can't change the type of item an intelligence is applied to (changing Sven the Bold from a *thundering greatsword* to a *holy avenger greatsword*, for example). However, as DM it's your call if you want to create an event or a cheap ritual that does so to make your players happy.

A great way to keep the intelligent item (or, really, any item) around is by upgrading it to keep up with the PCs. Use the "Item Levels as Treasure" guidelines from *Adventurer's Vault* (pages 197–198), or use the "Level Scaling" rules from the same section and start with a high-level version of your intelligent item and reduce its power to fit your PCs.

Sample Intelligent Items

These entries start with the item's history and provide a hook to use in your game. The rest of the information is appropriate to give to your players and includes the normal magic item description and brief rundown of the item's personality. The description of the magic item is more specific so that it can indicate peculiarities of the unique intelligent item described. Some items also have higher minimum levels than the regular version of the item, or more restrictive requirements on the type of item to which they can be applied.

Mrtok, Ogre Chief

Once in command of numerous ogre and orc tribes, Mrtok felt strong. He had conquered the goblins and the orcs within many miles. But then he decided it was time to beat the puny wizard in his fancy white tower. Now, Mrtok is imprisoned in a pair of magic gauntlets. He has had plenty of time to think, and has grown more sensible.

Adventure Hook

♦ Mrtok was there when the wizard Bellessus ran from his white tower, disappearing into the night and leaving most of his magic books and items there. Mrtok isn't sure what scared Bellessus so, but it might still be guarding the place.

Removing Intelligent Items

You might introduce an item, then regret it later. Maybe the personality that seemed fascinating to you never caught on. Perhaps the story that involved it is over and everybody lost interest in the item.

If you want to remove an intelligent item from your game, here are some ways to do so. Only remove an item if the PCs don't care about it or actively don't want it. Don't pull an item just because its usefulness to your story is done if the players still like it! If the item just isn't good enough mechanically anymore, you can upgrade or otherwise change the item (see "Disenchanting").

♦ A villain destroys the item or the persona within the item. This also shows that the villain is someone to be reckoned with.

♦ The item achieves an important goal and wants to pass on to the afterlife (if it was once alive), or sees its purpose as finished.

♦ The magical energy that sustains the intelligence can no longer hold it together, and its sentience dissipates.

♦ The PCs come across a trap or danger that can be circumvented if the intelligent item destroys itself.

♦ The item grows tired of mortal affairs and ceases to communicate. It still can't be disenchanted, but can be sold.

Mrtok, Ogre Chief (Gauntlets of Ogre Power)
***Player's Handbook* 247** **Level 5**

Crafted of thick plates of iron, these gauntlets are clearly very old and more than a little rusted. Designs are painted on them: a sadistic grin on one and beady eyes on the other.

These gauntlets chuckle quietly to themselves.

Item Slot: Hands
Property: Gain a +1 item bonus to Athletics checks and Strength ability checks (but not Strength attacks).
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with a melee attack. Add a +5 power bonus to the damage roll.

Communication Speech
Persona Mrtok is gruff and, while intelligent by ogre standards, has a poor grasp of language. He loves battle and chortles with glee when the person wearing him scores a good hit.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Giant
Skills Mrtok grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to ogres and orcs.

Shivli, White Wyrmling

The spirit of a white dragon wyrmling resides inside an ancient spear. Long ago, a traveling warrior came across a hurt baby dragon and tried to nurse it back to health. Nothing worked, and when the dragon was close to death, the warrior had a ritual cast to bind the dragon's spirit into her weapon. After the warrior's death, the spear traveled from person to person, eventually ending up where the PCs found it.

Shivli is a spear by default, but you can change her to any weapon you choose.

Adventure Hook

♦ Shivli vaguely recalls the names of her parents. Her father Gramasha is now an adult white dragon living in an underground vault, ruling over the people of a small town, who bring him food and treasure to keep him appeased. A powerful elder white dragon named Aliarge was Shivli's mother, and she has a citadel in a ruined dwarven stronghold near the summit of an icy mountain to the west. Great treasures lie within, guarded jealously by this sinister beast.

Shivli, White Wyrmling (Frost Weapon)
***Player's Handbook* 234** **Level 8+**

This spear is cold to the touch. Occasionally blue Iokharic runes appear across its surface, but the composition is never the same.

Weapon: Spear
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 cold damage per plus
Power (At-Will ♦ Cold): Free Action. All damage dealt by this weapon is cold damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.

Power (Daily ✦ Cold): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target takes an extra 1d8 cold damage and is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Level 13 or 18: 2d8 cold damage.
Level 23 or 28: 3d8 cold damage.
Communication Glyphic, speech
Persona Shivli was killed when she was young, and she's still naïve. Most comments she makes are pretty obvious. She's familiar with how white dragons work, but not with much else, so she often comments that the temperature's too hot or asks a walking PC why he or she doesn't just fly to the intended destination. She uses the *Shivli's breath* power only when she's frightened.
Her glyphic communication uses Iokharic runes.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Shivli grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to dragons, and to checks made to traverse cold environments (including navigation, detecting ice hazards, and enduring the cold).

Karrak-dur, the Overmind

Once a master of psionics, the man known as Karrak-dur traveled the land, engaging in contests of will, often against unwitting opponents. His bravado and arrogance became well known. Eventually, he discovered a town under the control of a powerful mind flayer named Shankahram and impetuously challenged the creature. Their mental duel was brief, and it ended in Karrak-dur's utter defeat. After casually eating Karrak-dur's brains, the mind flayer trapped the man's mind in a gold circlet and set it on display in his trophy room.

That was many centuries ago, and in that time the circlet was stolen, lost, bought, and sold many times over.

Adventure Hook

♦ Karrak-dur is certain that Shankahram is still alive and claims he recognizes many clues that lead to the illithid's lair. Shankahram ruled over many places, and has vast hoards of gold and gems protected by his thralls.

Karrak-dur, the Overmind (Circlet of Mental Onslaught)
***Adventurer's Vault* 139** **Level 11+**

Your mental attacks strike more true while you wear this slender circlet.

A thundering, haughty voice fills your head as you approach this item, calling itself Karrak-dur, the Overmind.

Item Slot: Head 9,000 gp
Property: Gain a +1 bonus to Will defense.
Power (Daily): Minor Action. Gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls when making Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma attacks until the end of the encounter.

Communication Speech, telepathy 20
Persona An egomaniacal force, Karrak-dur talks often about his mental prowess and mastery over other, smaller minds. He laments the loss of his body and believes that he could have ruled the world if it weren't for ill fate. He likes using his skill modifiers to prove the power of his mind. If a check fails, he's quick to blame anyone else.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Draconic, Elven
Skills Karrak-dur grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to mind flayers.

Stonesign, Shield of Orthorn

Created by expert dwarf artisans in the halls of Morrach Kadem, Stonesign was carried by Orthorn, a legendary dwarf cleric of Moradin. It was crafted to serve Orthorn loyally and provide him with protection and guidance. The shield was lost in a great battle, and Orthorn wore no shield for the rest of his days.

This shield has runes on its surface, and anyone who can read Dwarven script can understand them. They read: "Loyalty," "valor," "protection," "community," and "worship."

Adventure Hook

♦ Stonesign was created in Morrach Kadem, and anyone he chooses to carry him will be greeted as a friend there. The dwarves have fought a long war against creatures from the Underdark there, and powerful creatures such as ropers and mind flayers sometimes come from below.

Stonesign, Dwarf Guardian (Shield of Warding)
***Player's Handbook* 245** **Level 14+**

The hallmarks of dwarven craftsmanship and style are all present in this shield, and Dwarven runes decorate it.

When you're near this shield, you get a faint inkling that it wants you to pick it up.

Lvl 14 21,000 gp **Lvl 24** 525,000 gp
Item Slot: Arms
Power (Daily): Immediate Interrupt. You can use this power when an adjacent ally is hit by an attack. That ally gains resist 15 to any damage from the attack.

Level 24: Resist 20 to any damage from the attack.
Communication Speech, touch telepathy
Persona Stonesign is even-tempered and steadfast, with a calm, deep voice. He is helpful and especially enjoys using his skill modifiers to assist. Stonesign has a strong affinity for divine characters. Stonesign worships Moradin.
Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Common, Dwarven
Skills Stonesign grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to dwarves, the god Moradin, and to checks made to traverse mountain environments (including climbing, navigation, and detecting hazards).

Malaeura, the Emerald-Eyed

Living in an ancient underground crypt, the medusa queen Malaeura discovered ancient tomes that held the secrets of eternal life. She secured this boon for herself, but got more than she bargained for. A rakshasa rival fashioned a bow in Malaeura's image, duplicating her green eyes with fine emeralds. He slew her mate, Gormaugraj, and coated an arrow with his blood. This arrow slew Malaeura's body and trapped her soul in the bow. She vowed revenge on the rakshasa for their cruelty.

Malaeura is a longbow by default, but can be any type of bow or crossbow instead.

Adventure Hook

♦ Malaeura's old residence, a crypt for medusas and other monstrous races, lies deep within a wild jungle. She knows the way to reach it, but yuan-ti and rakshasa also make the jungle their home, and they're sworn enemies of Malaeura and all trespassers.

Malaeura, the Emerald-Eyed (Poisoned Weapon)
Adventurer's Vault 75 Level 15+

This wooden blow is covered with a pattern resembling a snake's scales. Two staring eyes are carved near the handgrip, and the pupils are set with emeralds.

The emeralds flash with a spark of sentience.

Lvl 15 +3 25,000 Lvl 25 +5 625,000 gp
Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp Lvl 30 +6 3,125,000 gp
Weapon: Longbow
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 poison damage per plus
Power (Daily ♦ Poison): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and weakened (save ends both).

Level 25 or 30: Ongoing 15 poison damage and weakened (save ends both).
Communication Speech, touch telepathy
Persona Malaeura loves battle and bloodshed. She feels great pride when an arrow fired from her finds its mark. Her speech is peppered with references to eyes, sight, stone, and snakes. She harbors a burning hatred toward rakshasas.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Malaeura grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to medusas, poisons, and rakshasas.

Eremann, Speaker of the Dead

These gloves are crafted from the hand bones of a devotee of the Raven Queen named Eremann, who had the ability to peer beyond the vale of death. He died an elderly man and found his power worked in reverse: He had the ability to peer back into the world of the living. Eremann's apprentice sewed the old man's bones onto a pair of gloves, then bent Eremann's power for evil means. In time, Eremann controlled his powers enough to fight back, and the apprentice discarded the gloves where he thought they'd never be found.

Adventure Hook

♦ Eremann's former apprentice long ago became a lich, and he sends out dark minions to influence courts in many of the good and fair settlements scattered throughout the world. His citadel is in the frozen north. Eremann remembers the places his apprentice visited and loved while alive, and suspects the lich's phylactery is hidden at one of them.

Eremann, Speaker of the Dead (Shadowfell Gloves)
Player's Handbook 247) Level 16+

These supple black gloves, woven with Shadowfell thread, are adorned with the bones of a humanoid's hand, which are stitched onto the backs of the gloves with red thread.

When you look at the gloves, they beckon you.

Lvl 16 45,000 gp Lvl 26 1,125,000 gp
Item Slot: Hands
Power (Daily ♦ Necrotic): Minor Action. Change the damage type dealt by the next arcane power you use to necrotic. Add 2d6 to the damage dealt by that power (if any).

Level 26: Add 3d6 to the damage dealt.
Communication Glyphic, speech
Persona Too much time spent speaking to the dead left Eremann moody and grim, though he is still dedicated to doing good works. His personality has an air of melancholy, or occasionally anger when someone talks about evil necromancers or disrespects the dead. Eremann worships the Raven Queen.
His glyphic communication uses Iokharic runes.
Alignment Good **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Eremann grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to undead, the god called the Raven Queen, and to checks made to traverse the Shadowfell (including navigation and detecting hazards).

Moonlight, First Blade of Night

A thin, elegant dagger, Moonlight claims she was the original *blade of night* and all others are pale imitations. She also claims she wasn't intelligent when first created. She was owned by rogues and assassins, and with each kill she gained a fragment of the victim's mind. Given her personality, this might be true. Now, she's with a new owner and looking forward to claiming a few more snippets of psyches.

Adventure Hook

♦ Moonlight once belonged to Fanas, the master of a thieves' guild that grew in size and power to become the largest and most dangerous in the world. But Moonlight knows the location of Fanas's stronghold. It won't be easy to get in—the thieves have strong magic.

Moonlight, First Blade of Night (Blade of Night)
Adventurer's Vault 65) Level 22+

Tiny, bright lights shine within this black metal blade.

The hilt is coated in black lacquer, with a round, perfect moonstone set where hilt meets blade.

You feel a sense of smug superiority emanating from the weapon.

Lvl 22 +5 325,000 gp Lvl 27 +6 1,625,000 gp
Weapon: Light Blade
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: The target is blinded until the end of your next turn
Power (Daily ♦ Zone): Minor Action. Use this power to create a zone in a close burst 2. The zone blocks line of sight and lasts until the end of your next turn.

Communication Speech
Persona Moonlight is smug and a little unpredictable. She's ruled by her emotions, and they're especially chaotic. She gets bored easily, so she likes goading people into combat and tricking people in general. Moonlight worships Sehanine.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common
Skills Moonlight grants a +2 bonus to skill checks related to methods of assassination.

The Scrolls of Ummanabora

Devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, the city-state of Ummanabora discovered the secrets of the world and time, filling thousands upon thousands of scrolls with historical and metaphysical lore. The city-state was raided by devils intent on stealing its knowledge, but they found all the scrolls blank–mere parchment. The Umannaborans had a failsafe to protect their libraries. A staff held by the loremaster contained all the text of the scrolls, and only when it was present could they be read. The loremaster and her staff had disappeared before the devils arrived. The devils razed the city out of spite and flung it into the far reaches of the Astral Sea.

This staff holds the combined knowledge of an entire society of sages, and one who carries it can unlock small snippets of that knowledge.

Adventure Hook

♦ One who finds Ummanabora and returns the staff unlocks one of the greatest stores of knowledge across all the planes. A few devils were bound to eternally guard the ruins, and many bizarre creatures from the distant reaches of the Astral Sea (and emigrants from the Far Realm) have come to live within the ruins.

PCs on a quest to destroy a powerful demon lord, deity, or (especially) archdevil might find secrets here that could help with such a mission.

The Scrolls of Ummanabora (Mnemonic Staff)
Adventurer's Vault 104 Level 27

Thousands of lines of runic text spiral around the entire length of this staff.

You feel the presence of great knowledge when you are near the object.

Lvl 27 +6 1,625,000 gp
Implement (Staff)
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to any monster knowledge skill check.
Power (Daily): Minor Action. Swap a power you've prepared for another power in your spellbook of equal or lower level. Each power must also be of equal or lower level than the level of the staff.

Communication Speech, touch telepathy
Persona The scrolls have little in the way of a personality, and they approach everything analytically. The scrolls do not offer information that is not requested. The intelligence of the staff is essentially an interface between the wielder and the information therein, not an organic consciousness.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** All
Skills The Scrolls of Ummanabora grant a +2 bonus to checks made when doing research from books or other documents.

About the Author

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FORGOTTEN REALMS

Children of Darkness

by Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by Dan Scott and Concept Art House

From the moment of the ancient betrayal, the drow have dwelled in the bowels of the earth, nestled in the bosom of the Spider Queen, where they suffer her insane whispers and attend to her capricious demands. For most, there is no life other than service to Lolth. They want nothing more than to be the vessels of her dark desire. To deny the wishes of the goddess is to invite unspeakable agony, scorn, ostracism, and, most likely, annihilation. Indeed, few drow even dare to think of breaking with the traditions that have informed their culture for hundreds—if not thousands—of years, for who can say whether the Spider Queen is listening when your thoughts turn to treason?

The drow exist in a complex society, where treachery is the currency of advancement, where poison laces every cup, and where each shadow holds the promise of a slow and agonizing death. Given these circumstances, one would wonder how anyone could find the resolve needed to escape the clutches of evil. In truth, only a few find the courage needed to stand against the matrons and demons ruling their worlds. Most are crushed under the heel of their betters and offered up to the goddess on blood-stained altars to serve as warnings to others with similar ideas. A few flee into the wilds of the Underdark, but become lost in the labyrinth of chambers and tunnels, eventually falling to starvation, thirst, or any one of the endless monstrous horrors stalking this lightless world. Only a rare few claw their way out of the quagmire of corruption and

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embrace the clean air of the surface world, but even these lucky souls must ever after watch their backs because Lolth is loathe to let her secrets and her people escape.

Drow in the Realms

The drow occupy a special place in the Forgotten Realms, and their influence on the setting over the years has been considerable, so much so that the existence of drow adventurers in the Realms is taken for granted. Whether inspired by a certain famous drow ranger or by a desire to play a dark and sinister character orbiting the shadowy edges of the adventuring group, players of drow characters fall into the trap of stereotype, recycling the same idea time and again until the drow adventurer becomes so commonplace, it's easy to overlook the mystique of this wicked race. Of course, there's nothing wrong with playing the archetypical drow or slightly modifying the stereotype to make it your own, but then again, you have a range of other options that can inject new life into these popular icons.

Drow by the Numbers

Although drow villains and heroes appear throughout the fiction, adventures, and game products, it's important to note their place in the Dungeons & Dragons game, at least in regard to their numbers. Doing so reveals a great deal about the position the drow occupy in the minds of the common folk in the world. The *Monster Manual* presents drow adversaries from levels 11 to level 15, placing them squarely in the lower half of the paragon tier. As such, they represent threats and foes that transcend the common person's experiences, and they exist far beyond the typical threats an ordinary member of a race might face. In fact, the Arcana DC of 20 to identify even a basic salient feature about this race indicates that few commoners know anything about them at all. Certainly, sages, leaders, and figures of note with a bit more worldly experience likely know more of these insidious villains, but for the typical person in the world, the drow are more myth than reality. Even those folks who know of the drow (say one in twenty), the extent of their knowledge is largely limited to an understanding that they are a subterranean people who emerge to raid the surface for slaves, and they have little knowledge of Lolth's influence over them.

Obviously, there are exceptions. It's safe to say elves and eladrin know a bit more about the drow, given their historical connections. Also, drow prey on elves and eladrin more than they do other surface races, making drow a looming threat to these people. Still, among the smaller and more remote communities, one could suppose that an individual elf, eladrin, or half-elf has probably never seen a drow, wouldn't know what to do if they encountered one, and certainly would have little idea about their culture and way of life. Again, the wiser and more powerful members of these populations would know more, but generally speaking, drow are an elusive, rarely seen, and widely misunderstood people that exist as a distant and shadowy threat.

From this, a drow player character is likely to move easier through the world than many DMs might otherwise allow. When dealing with common folk, shopkeepers, bartenders, artisans, the average individual might think the character's appearance strange, maybe even unsettling, but treat that character the same way they would any individual possessed of an unusual appearance. Does this mean drow characters are free of prejudice and persecution? Not at all: The danger is more severe, for the people who know best about the drow are the ones best suited to cause these characters grief. Rival adventuring parties, powerful individuals knowledgeable in the nature of dark elves, and other people with a long-standing grudge against the drow can all harass a drow adventurer. So even though a drow character might move among the ignorant with ease, she must be ever vigilant about *not* attracting undue attention lest someone of consequence come to purge of the community of a real or perceived threat.

Drow Customs and Behavior

Lolth's influence on the drow cannot be understated. Drow society is one built upon fear and ambition, where strength, cunning, and violence are rewarded, and where weakness, compassion, and mercy are stamped out wherever they are found. Status is everything to the drow, and nearly every dark elf seeks advancement by any means possible. From birth, the drow receive treachery and cruelty in place of warmth and love. Those children perceived as weak are denied food and other necessities. If they survive, they'll be stronger for it. If not, they are spared an even nastier end later in life. Children showing compassion receive brutal punishments as their rewards, such as being beaten or tormented until he or she is cured of any future inclinations. As a result, drow children are vicious and bloodthirsty to escape punishment, and, more importantly, to survive.

The drow carry these early lessons with them throughout their lives, competing for scarce resources, honors, and advancement with the same tenacity they exhibited as children. Male drow distinguish themselves by murder, betrayal, and acts of sinister treachery to curry favor with their betters in the hopes of attaining a higher place, or to win a place of comfort as the courtesan of an important matron. Ambitious drow must be careful about their ascent lest they rise too quickly and gain the wrong kinds of attention—usually in the form of temporary alliances between those they stepped on to get ahead. These alliances frequently result in an equally rapid fall.

Outsiders see female drow as having an easier time than males, but their paths are just as perilous because the degree of competition exceeds that of their male counterparts. Female drow can enter Lolth's clergy and carve or poison their way to positions of great power. Those that seek a path other than the church find themselves competing not with just their fellow females, but also resentful males who fear and resent the females.

Add to the nasty competition permeating every level of drow society the capricious whims of a dark and terrible goddess, drow cities and smaller communities exist ever on the brink of disaster, with noble houses rising and falling, individuals attaining great heights of fame and privilege only to be dragged down into a storm of poisoned blades. Through it all, those the drow subjugate languish under the cruel whips and plot uprisings to topple their masters and gain freedom, while aberrant horrors of the deep Underdark bubble up from the depths to wage war against these communities and enslave or devour them all. Against this complex and deadly backdrop, a drow player character is born.

Escaping the Past

Every drow character must grapple with its upbringing. If the drow was born in a drow enclave, the character must come to terms with the horrors of its past and the player must decide why and how the character transcended the indoctrination to become a hero. You can use the following options as written or to spark ideas for creating your own history.

Anomalous: You are a curious exception to the rule. Somehow, you escaped the worst punishments, survived the harsh competition of your childhood, and slipped away from your people before you could become corrupted. A sympathetic relative who shares your good heart might have sheltered you from the excesses of your people. Or, you might have been born to greatness and kidnapped by outsiders to be used against the drow later, or you were the sole survivor after your city was wiped out by mind flayers, duergar, or aboleths. In any event, you have none of the personality characteristics attributed to the drow.

Haunted: You experienced the full horrors of a childhood in a drow city and, to survive, committed a number of evil acts yourself. Each time you slid the knife in the rival, whipped a slave, or consorted with fiends, the guilt and self-loathing grew until you could take it no more. You broke free from the darkness, but your memories are filled with visions of your past, dogging your steps and haunting your dreams. You are resolved to make amends in the hopes that you'll escape the nightmares of your past.

Unapologetic: You make no apologies for what you have done. It was necessary to survive. Murder, assault, thieving, and terrible betrayals are all part of the price of living. Now that you're free from your old life, you no longer need to do those

things. However, you're not above resorting to underhanded tactics if the situation demands it, so you fall into the older patterns whenever you must.

Unhinged: You escaped your past, but not without a price. The experience left you broken, as if your mind has become a shattered mirror, so when you reflect on your memories they are disjointed and confusing. The degree of your madness can be mild to severe. You might be an eccentric with unusual, but not bizarre behavior. Examples included being obsessed with cleanliness, feeling uncomfortable around all people or those of a specific race, going through a particular ritual before you enter your trance, having facial tics or erratic speech patterns, or swinging from one emotional extreme to another. Or, you might be deranged—reckless and dangerous not only to yourself, but also your allies.

Drow Archetypes

Defining how you reconcile your upbringing with your current life as an adventurer is an important part of defining your adventurer in the larger world, but it is only one piece of the puzzle that helps construct your character's identity. The *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide* presents 27 character backgrounds to help ground your character into the game in interesting ways. Selecting an appropriate background grounds your character in a particular place and also can establish your outlooks and objectives. The following archetypes are meant to be used with the character backgrounds to help you describe your relationship with your adopted land.

The Immigrant Drow: Dragon Coast

Of all the places a drow might wind up, there are few better havens than the Dragon Coast. West Gate's cosmopolitan climate makes for a good retreat for drow escaping the Underdark, and the scum of Ilipur might embrace a drow adventurer if the character survives long enough to prove his or her worth. Even outside the major communities, the Dragon Coast is an excellent place for a drow to start a new life, because the people of this land value gold above just about everything else, and they can overcome ingrained prejudices if the object of their scorn has coin to spend.

Life on the Dragon Coast is perilous indeed, and for all its acceptance of a varied and diverse population, the streets of West Gate, Ilipur, and elsewhere are not especially safe and promise robbery, assault, or even bloody murder for the unwary. For drow characters, such an environment isn't all that unfamiliar and most find it easy to adapt.

Unhinged and **unapologetic** characters are most likely to select the Immigrant archetype as their character background. Unhinged characters join the ranks of other mad folk struggling to survive here, while unapologetic characters have no trouble using the talents they acquired in the Underdark to rise above the common thieves and thugs.

Living among other races is not grounds for ostracism by your kin provided you keep to the traditions of your homeland and advance the ends of the drow people. Should you betray the principles of Lolth, expect no mercy from your former kin for if you are discovered, they hunt you down and kill you.

The Refugee Drow: East Rift

The catastrophe of the recent past brought changes to the world, caused widespread upheaval and destruction, and left much of the world reeling in the shock of the Spellplague. Although most point to the ruins on the surface, the devastation spread to the tunnels of the Underdark as well, collapsing ancient cities, wiping out entire civilizations, and erasing vast swathes of regions. Like all other people, the drow were affected by this event and many drow cities vanished into the darkness, their people scattered and defeated, and their ways and allegiances sundered like the lands above.

You are a descendant of these refugees, and the ways of the drow people from which your ancestors came have been lost or confused, leaving you and your kin with an incomplete picture of your heritage. Lacking a place to call home, your people flee to other ruins, or seek shelter among your ancestral enemies such as the gold dwarves of East Rift. Others might seek conquest and come boiling out of the darkness to lay claim on other civilizations and enslave them.

Regardless of the intent of your people's tattered civilization, you have broken with the others and are now ensconced in a new culture, somehow proving that you are different and can be trusted. East Rift is not likely to accept drow since they make regular forays into the depths to oust the drow squatters lurking in the remains of Lost Underhome, but you made yourself invaluable to the dwarves.

Your past is likely filled with awful events, desperate fights against your rivals, betrayals by those you loved, and witnessing such horror that your dreams are filled with evil phantoms.

Anomalous and **haunted** drow make the best refugees because they have escaped the culture of corruption defining drow existence. These characters can show their good intent and might become valued allies to the people who offer them shelter. Such characters might assist by infiltrating the ranks of their former kin, while others can act as scouts and spies, or even as instructors, teaching techniques for fighting and defeating drow enemies. Your alliance with these newfound friends does you no favors when

dealing with other drow. You are beneath contempt—a liability that must be purged.

The Classic Drow: Menzoberranzan

The classic drow reached adulthood in a drow community. These settlements range in size from tiny outposts in the far-flung regions of the Underdark to huge sprawling city-states that spread throughout a cavern and spill out into the adjoining tunnels. Of all the drow settlements, none are as famous (or infamous) as Menzoberranzan, the birthplace of countless treacherous acts and villainous deeds, and also the homeland of Drizzt.

Whether you come from Menzoberranzan or another drow community, the results are typically the same. Your upbringing is steeped in Lolth and thus you were exposed to the full range of horrors that define life in the Underdark. Your past is likely filled with awful events, desperate fights against your rivals, betrayals by those you loved, and witnessing such horror that your dreams are filled with evil phantoms. As a result, **any** of the drow templates work well for classic drow. You might be anomalous, somehow cleaving to your principles even as evil swirls around you, or you might be unhinged, a broken vessel, struggling to find your place in the world after the terrors of your youth.

If you select the classic drow background, you need to decide under what terms you have escaped your community. Did you leave voluntarily, fleeing your people, or were you cast out and shunned for deviant behavior or beliefs? You might retain your loyalties, but take a more reasoned approach when dealing with your ancestral enemies, or you might try to lead the drow into a new era of prosperity, working to forge inroads into surface communities to facilitate trade (see the Horizon Syndicate below for one example).

Although some drow genuinely seek to escape the curse weighing upon their souls, many more surface-dwelling drow seek a sinister end. Still loyal to the goddess, these drow work to infiltrate their enemies to act as spies or saboteurs. Using magic or mundane methods, they mask their appearance and intensions to slip into their enemies' communities where they gather information about strengths and weaknesses, feeding the intelligence to the matrons.

The longer the drow spend among their enemies, the greater the risk of the drow defecting and compromising the mission. In your case, you might sympathize with your enemies and even see them as undeserving of the hatred and impending violence about to fall on their heads. Then again, you might seek a greater end and give your betters false information to orchestrate their defeat and thus damage or undermine your rival house's standing to give your house the chance to ascend.

Whatever you decide, this archetype is the hardest to integrate into a party of adventurers. Characters that maintain their connections to their homeland are bound to be evil or chaotic evil, and if not, have sinister tendencies that can wreak havoc in a group, which can undermine their ability to work together. This said, the classic drow does provide interesting roleplaying opportunities. You can roleplay through the realization of your people's darkness, while experiencing a better and nobler life among the traditional enemies of the drow. You might seek redemption, struggling to do your duty, while grappling with the conflicting emotions inside. Whatever you decide, be sure to work with the DM and your fellow players to find the right balance between playing your character in a way that's true to the background, but also keeps the disruption to game play at a minimum.

Horizon Syndicate

After the widespread destruction defining the last century, a growing faction of drow divorced themselves from the old ways to follow a new path. They believed the only way to weather the troubles affecting the lands would be to approach their dealings with other races in a way that did not always result in violence. Rather than taking what they wanted, when resources were already scarce, perhaps they could achieve better results by engaging their enemies in trade, exchanging valuable metals, gemstones, and other goods found exclusively in the Underdark for commodities generally absent from the depths of the earth. A group of merchants set aside their private agendas to forge a new commercial enterprise they called the Horizon Syndicate and set out to deal with their surface neighbors. The results have been mixed, for their enemies have long memories, and the drow have proved time and again unworthy of trust, but a smattering of ambitious merchants have seized upon these new opportunities in spite of the risks, seeing these ventures as an excellent way to expand their presence into new markets. In the years since their founding, the Horizon Syndicate has sent its tendrils across the continent, expanding their enterprise throughout the Realms.

The Horizon Syndicate is an excellent place for drow who disagree with the shifting politics and treachery of their homelands to seek to escape and integrate into surface communities.

On the surface, the Horizon Syndicate appears to be nothing more than a merchant conglomerate that facilitates trade between the surface communities and those in the Underdark. A good number of its members strive to do just this, and these representatives deal fairly in their negotiations. Given the drow's penchant for treachery, however, it should come to no surprise that not all its members are as committed to this new enterprise as the organization claims.

The Horizon Syndicate is an excellent place for drow who disagree with the shifting politics and treachery of their homelands to seek to escape and integrate into surface communities. Some join the Syndicate for a time in the hopes of breaking away once they establish a network of allies to give them haven during their transition out of their societies. Others join the Syndicate to put distance between themselves and the experiences of their childhood, hoping to mask their memories with new ones forged in a world far from the terrors of the Underdark. Overall, the Syndicate enjoys a diverse membership and has even expanded to allow nondrow to join their ranks in the hopes of spreading their presence into markets ordinarily closed to the drow.

Joining the Organization: The Horizon Syndicate is traditionally a drow institution and thus membership has, up until recently, been exclusive to drow candidates. As the organization has grown, other races that have no compunctions against working alongside the drow are welcome, though the Factors are ever watchful for spies. To join the Horizon Syndicate, the character pays a small fee (10 gp) and becomes a junior member with few privileges. These low-ranking members are assigned to departments based on their talents, such keeping the books, packing cargo, or scouting out new trade routes to distant clients. The Syndicate uses this training period to assess the character's loyalties, objectives, and talents, and so junior members are monitored almost at all times to judge the new member's worth. Those who look as if they might compromise the organization vanish, but some might be kept on as junior members for the entirety of their careers if they have talents the Syndicate finds useful. Only those who prove their worth and loyalty are welcomed as full members, a position in which the character has some authority and freedom. Such agents can determine which missions they would undertake and are free to take jobs

outside the organization provided they continue to devote some time to the Syndicate.

The highest-ranking members, called Factors, form up the Syndicate's core. They oversee the expansion of the organization into new communities, broker larger agreements, and vet junior members to determine their suitability to become full members. There are eight Factors, and their motivations range from the peaceful to the downright sinister, with some truly abiding by the principles on which this organization was founded, while others seek to exploit the Syndicate's connections to work their villainy.

Character Benefits: The benefits a character attains by membership depend on the character's standing. Junior members receive free room and board in spartan accommodations if needed, and receive free passage to other Syndicate holdings provided the travel relates to the Syndicate.

Full members receive a small stipend to pay for a permanent residence in any community friendly to the Syndicate they desire and also receive compensation for clothing, food, and basic necessities. They also receive a 10% discount on all mundane goods. They never need pay passage on any Syndicate ship and once a year they can requisition a vessel for a mission unrelated to the Syndicate's operations.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Drow Syndicate members have a more cosmopolitan approach in their dealings with other races. Although they might harbor some bigotry toward what they perceive as lesser folk, they hide it well. Most are shrewd negotiators, and they are adept at coming out on top in their dealings. Since members travel a great deal, these drow are accustomed to dealing with other cultures and might embrace a variety of customs and beliefs that make them decidedly unusual representatives of their race.

Typical Members: The Horizon Syndicate welcomes members of all occupations and most races. By far, drow are the most numerous members, but the Syndicate has a number of humans and a few half-elves as well. Other races are represented in smaller numbers.

Just about any character can join the Syndicate, though rogues and wizards are preferred, followed closely by warlocks, rangers, and fighters. Paladins and clerics are not usually welcomed, but there have been exceptions, and rumors hold that at least half of the Factors are in fact priests.

Name	Prerequisites	Benefit
Drow Fighting Style	Drow, Dex 15	While armed with a light blade and hand crossbow, you don't provoke opportunity attacks with the hand crossbow
Drow Heretic	Drow	+2 damage against spiders
Instinctive Darkness	Drow, *cloud of darkness* racial power	Use *cloud of darkness* as an immediate reaction when target of melee or close attack
Lolth's Meat	Drow	Drop enemy to 0 hit points, gain +1 bonus to attack rolls until end of next turn
Shadowslip	Drow, *cloud of darkness* racial power	Shift 2 after using *cloud of darkness*
Flickering Shroud	11th level, drow, *cloud of darkness*	Use *darkfire* to grant an ally +2 AC and Reflex defense racial power
Highborn Drow	11th level, drow	+2 to Arcana checks, and gain *webs of darkness* racial power
Shadowborn	11th level, drow	Gain +2 initiative in darkness or dim illumination and +1 damage to targets grating combat advantage

Lore of the Organization

A character knows the following information about the Horizon Syndicate with a successful History check.

DC 15: The Horizon Syndicate is a drow merchant conglomerate created to facilitate trade between surface communities and those of the Underdark. Since their formation, they have slowly spread throughout Faerûn, wherever the locals can tolerate their presence.

DC 20: The Horizon Syndicate maintains a peaceful front and has divorced itself from the more violent drow. Committed to their commercial ventures, the Syndicate is careful to maintain their neutrality when conflict erupts between drow and other races.

DC 25: Rumors indicate that the Syndicate has interests beyond commerce and some suggest that this organization is nothing more than a front for a complex and extensive drow spy network. The Syndicate members deny these allegations, dismissing them as being the spurious claims of their competitors.

A Horizon Syndicate Campaign

For players wishing to play drow characters, the Horizon Syndicate offers an excellent opportunity for introducing their characters to an adventuring party. Since the Syndicate is careful to maintain peaceful relations with their clients, their drow membership has a bit more freedom and acceptance than has their nonaffiliated kin. Syndicate members see the organization as being truly devoted to its founding principals, thus allowing the character to seamlessly work within another adventuring party. In fact, nondrow characters could also join the Syndicate, which gives the DM a good way to spark new adventures by sending the PCs on missions for the organization.

If the DM desires, the Syndicate might, in fact, be just what people suspect—a spy network. If so, the organization that might have fostered the drow PC might eventually evolve into a sinister and villainous group, with the transformation of its role occurring when the adventurer learns more about the Factors and their personal ambitions. The campaign could see the drow PC and any allies working to purge the rogue elements, restoring it to its original purpose, or oppose it, fighting its agents in a protracted campaign.

Drow Options

The *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide* presents a wide range of options for players to expand their drow characters in interesting and dynamic ways. The following options build upon this solid foundation by helping to expand a drow player's options as the character develops.

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites. Heroic tier feats are the only feats you can take if you are 10th level or lower.

Drow Fighting Style

Prerequisites: Drow, Dex 15

Benefit: When holding a light blade in one hand and a hand crossbow in the other, you do not provoke opportunity attacks when making attacks using your hand crossbow.

Drow Heretic

Prerequisite: Drow

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against creatures with the spider keyword.

Instinctive Darkness

Prerequisites: Drow, *cloud of darkness* racial power

Benefit: You can use your *cloud of darkness* racial power as an immediate reaction when you are the target of a melee or close attack.

Lolth's Meat

Prerequisite: Drow

Benefit: Whenever you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points or fewer, you gain a +1 feat bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Shadowslip

Prerequisites: Drow, *cloud of darkness* racial power

Benefit: When you use your *cloud of darkness* racial power, you can shift 2 squares as a free action.

Paragon Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Flickering Shroud

Prerequisites: 11th level, drow, *darkfire* racial power

Benefit: When you use your *darkfire* racial power, you can alter its effects to grant the target a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex saving throws until the end of your next turn.

Highborn Drow [Drow]

Prerequisite: 11th level, drow

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to Arcana checks. In addition, whenever you use your Lolth-touched racial feature, you can use the *cloud of darkness*, *darkfire*, or *webs of darkness* power.

Webs of Darkness — **Drow Racial Power**

Inky tendrils of solidified darkness leap from your fingertip and bind your enemies.

Encounter
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence + 4 vs. Reflex, Wisdom + 4 vs. Reflex, or Charisma + 4 vs. Reflex
Increase to +6 bonus at 21st level
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, the target is slowed and all creatures have concealment against the target.

Shadowborn [Drow]

Prerequisite: 11th level, drow

Benefit: Whenever you start an encounter in an area of darkness or dim illumination, you gain a +2 bonus to your initiative check and, until the second round of combat, a +1 feat bonus to damage rolls against any creature you have combat advantage against.

Drow Equipment

In the depths of the Underdark, drow must be innovative in the design and function of their tools to survive.

Poisons

Although famous for their knockout poison, the drow employ a wide range of toxins, some created through alchemical means, while others are the product of magical experimentation.

Skull Rot Level 5 Poison

Distilled from toxic subterranean fungus, skull rot causes alchemically enhanced spores to root in the brain and trigger madness.

Poison 250 gp
Attack: +8 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends), and the poison makes a secondary attack.
Secondary Attack: +8 vs. Will; the target makes a basic or charge attack against the nearest creature it can see on its turn (save ends).
Special: This poison works only when it is inhaled.

Eyeburn Paste Level 10 Poison

A noxious paste made from powered stone and a mild acid, this poison steals the sight from its victims.

Poison 1,250 gp
Attack: +13 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).
First Failed Save: The target is blinded (save ends).

Mindscorch Level 15 Poison
Brewed from brain matter harvested from mind flayers, this potent toxin shreds the mind.
Poison 6,250 gp
Attack: +18 vs. Will; ongoing 10 poison damage and -2 penalty to close or area attack rolls (save ends).
First Failed Save: The target is dazed (save ends).

The Calling Level 20 Poison

A foul mixture of spider eggs and slime collected from an aboleth, this vicious toxin devours the victim from the inside out.

Poison 31,250 gp
Attack: +23 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 15 poison damage and a -2 penalty to the target's Fortitude defense (save ends both).
Special: The calling can be delivered only by food or drink, and it attacks 2d6 minutes after being ingested. A target slain by this poison causes a bloodweb spider swarm to appear in the target's space. It attacks the closest creature each round until destroyed.

Magic Items

The following magic items are representative of the sorts of gear employed by drow characters. Most drow-wrought magic items feature spider web etchings, spider imagery, and demonic creatures.

Spiderkissed Weapon Level 7+

The weapon's surface is covered in faint lines evocative of a spider's web.

Lvl 7	+2	2,600 gp	Lvl 22	+5	325,000 gp
Lvl 12	+3	13,000 gp	Lvl 27	+6	1,625,000 gp
Lvl 17	+4	65,000 gp			

Weapon: Any melee
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 poison damage per plus
Power (At-Will ✦ Poison): Free Action. All damage dealt by this weapon is poison damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target is slowed (save ends).
First Failed Save: The target is immobilized (save ends).

Virulent Weapon Level 3+

A pestilential fluid weeps from pits marring the weapon's surface.

Lvl 3	+1	680 gp	Lvl 18	+4	85,000 gp
Lvl 8	+2	3,400 gp	Lvl 23	+5	425,000 gp
Lvl 13	+3	17,000 gp	Lvl 28	+6	2,125,000 gp

Weapon: Light Blade
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 poison damage per plus
Property: Poison applied to this weapon gains a +2 item bonus to its attack rolls.

Rod of Flaying Level 24+

A tangle of steel wires and barbed hooks extend from one end of this crimson rod.

Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Implement (Rod)
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: The target is dazed until the end of your next turn.
Power (Daily): Free Action. Use this power whenever you hit a target affected by your Warlock's Curse. The target takes ongoing 10 damage and is dazed (save ends both).
Level 29: Ongoing 15 damage and the target is dazed (save ends both).

Gloves of Venom **Level 8+**

Constructed of lightweight spidersilk, these gloves fit like a second skin.

Lvl 8 +1 3,400 gp Lvl 28 +4 2,125,000 gp
Lvl 18 +2 85,000 gp

Item Slot: Hands

Power (Daily ✦ Poison): Minor Action. Change the damage type dealt by the next arcane power you use to poison. Add 1d6 to the damage dealt by that power (if any).

Level 16: Add 2d6 to the damage dealt.
Level 26: Add 3d6 to the damage dealt.

Piwafwi **Level 17+**

A long cloak of woven spidersilk sparkles in the moonlight.

Lvl 17 +4 65,000 gp Lvl 27 +6 1,625,000 gp
Lvl 22 +5 325,000 gp

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property: Gain an item bonus to Stealth checks equal to the cloak's enhancement bonus. Gain resist 5 fire. Level 22 or 27: Resist 10 fire

Power (Daily ✦ Illusion): Minor Action. You have concealment until you make an attack or are hit by an attack.

CURSEBORN

"We all inherit the sins of our ancestors; how we choose to deal with them in our time determines if we pass them along to our children."

Prerequisite: Drow race

Each drow character is born into darkness and then burdened with the Corellon's curse and Lolth's blessing. The curse manifests in their enslavement to the Spider Queen, while the blessing represents the goddess's filthy touch, a gift ensuring the drow remain in her service. Drow can use only a portion of Lolth's power, manifesting it into clouds of darkness or limning their enemies with purple flame, but a few drow are powerful enough to expand their talents in other areas. These drow learn to unlock the hidden reserves of their curse and exploit them to achieve greater results.

As a curseborn, you have awakened hidden powers within you. Whether you believe these powers are further gifts granted to you by the Spider Queen or are a permutation of your existing abilities granted by Lolth's touch, or even a revelation based on your efforts to find redemption, the results are the same. Your Lolthtouched powers are intensified, your darkness is alive with umbral strands of shadow, and your ability to create *darkfire* is magnified to encompass to affect a number of enemies. In addition, you also learn methods of using Lolth's gifts in superior ways, from burning your foes with the flames of darkness to sliding into the Shadowfell to cloak your body with tendrils of darkness.

Your evolution into a curseborn results in a subtle transformation that is unnoticeable except when you are using your curseborn or Lolthtouched powers. Each time you tap into these abilities, your bright eyes flare, casting your face into ghastly shadows, while tiny black spiders composed of living shadow scurry off to vanish into puffs of acrid smoke. None of these features interferes with your other abilities, but drow recognize you as being kissed by the Spider Queen.

Curseborn Path Features

Clinging Shadows (11th level): In addition to its normal effects, the area of your *cloud of darkness* power is also difficult terrain for all creatures except you.

Curseborn Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you regain the use of one of your Lolthtouched powers you have already expended this encounter.

Darkfire Conflagration (16th level): Whenever you use your *darkfire* power, you can target three creatures instead of one.

Curseborn Racial Powers

Accursed Flames **Curseborn Attack 11**

Purple flames limn your target, burning the target's mind and body.

Encounter ✦ Charm, Fire
Minor Action Ranged 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence +4 vs. Reflex, Wisdom +4 vs. Reflex, or Charisma +4 vs. Reflex
Increase to +6 bonus at 21st level.
Hit: 2d8 + Charisma modifier fire damage, and until the end of your next turn the target is dazed, grants all creatures combat advantage, and cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.

Special: This power uses the same ability score as the one you selected for your *darkfire* power.

Shadow Stride **Curseborn Utility 12**

Shadows cloak your body as you step partly into the Shadowfell so that you can move with astonishing speed.

Encounter
Move Action Personal
Effect: You can shift up to your speed. You gain concealment until the end of your next turn.

Alluring Lights **Curseborn Attack 20**

Three spheres of violet light appear next to your target, drawing their attention and luring them to their doom.

Encounter ✦ Charm, Conjuration
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Targets: One, two, or three squares
Effect: You conjure a sphere of light into the target square. When a creature moves into or begins its turn in that square or an adjacent square, make the following attack as an opportunity attack. You can move an *alluring light* up to your speed as a move action. If one sphere is dispelled, all the spheres are dispelled.
Attack: Intelligence +4 vs. Will, Wisdom +4 vs. Will, or Charisma +4 vs. Will
Increase to +6 bonus at 21st level.
Hit: The target is immobilized (save ends). Until the target saves, if you move the *alluring light* that dazed the target you can also slide the target an equal number of squares to keep the target adjacent to the *alluring light*.
Sustain Minor: You can sustain this power until the end of the encounter.
Special: This power uses the same ability score as the one you selected for your *darkfire* power.

REDEEMED DROW

You have ever struggled to rise above the darkness clouding your heart, but now you have the chance to prove to the world that you are different from all the rest.

Prerequisite: 21st level, drow race

No matter the deeds done, no matter the life lived, none of your mortal actions change the fact that you are drow—a dark elf and a living symbol of mortal corruption and vice—and throughout the rest of your days, you must bear the burden of the understanding that nothing you do can ever lift the stain that darkens your heart. The only escape from the curse is to truly transcend the mortal coil and become something more—to leave behind the shell of flesh and bone so your true light can shine and reveal to all the purity of your purpose. To this end, you commit yourself to become more than drow and deny the Spider Queen her hold over you for all time.

Becoming a redeemed drow represents a drow's ultimate repudiation of the Spider Queen. With this complete and total denial, you escape the webs of her influence and attain a higher state of existence. You name Lolth as your enemy and commit your life to fighting her machinations and ploys, in the hopes of showing the world and the gods that you have succeeded in breaking your ties where others have failed.

Your successes earn you the attention of Corellon (and possibly others), who aids you in your crusade against your former kin by imbuing you with a greater sense of purpose to impel you to daring acts and astonishing deeds. As your mission nears completion, Lolth throws the full weight of her legions against you, and through the storm of demons, spiders, driders, and drow, you must stand fast before the blooming doubts and misgivings that threaten to cloud your vision. In the end, Corellon blesses you with the greatest gift you could ask for: a second chance at life without the filthy caress of the horrific Spider Queen.

A Second Chance

The road to redemption varies with the drow, but many achieve the rewards sought by following the path outlined below. This said, there are many paths to redemption and finding this coveted prize might take you in unexpected directions.

True Redemption: Upon completing your final quest, you were plucked from the mortal world and escorted by Corellon's chosen servants to make your final journey to his dominion in the Astral Sea. There, standing before the great and mighty god, your mortal deeds are weighed and judged, your accomplishments celebrated, and your failings considered. In the end, the god lifts the curse from you. For a moment, you see yourself as you were originally formed, before the betrayal—before the fall—and all falls dark. In a blink of an eye, you awaken once more, your soul contained in a new infant body. As you take in your surroundings, your memories of the past fade as you take in the long, rich life that lies before you.

Redeemed Drow Features

Sacred Duty (21st level): Whenever you make an attack that reduces a creature with the demon or spider keyword to 0 or fewer hit points, you can spend a healing surge as a free action.

Lift Her Touch (24th level): You can expend your Lolthtouched racial power to recharge a previously expended encounter power.

Burden of Redemption (30th level): The first time you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points each day, you regain a number of hit points equal to your surge value and gain resist 10 all damage until the end of the encounter.

Redeemed Drow Power

Light of Heaven **Redeemed Utility 26**

The pain of your injuries unleashes the ire of your patron. You will see this battle to its end.

Daily ✦ Healing
Free Action Personal
Trigger: You are bloodied by an attack.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain regeneration 15, shed bright light in a 10 square radius, and grant all allies within the light resist 10 necrotic.

About the Author

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Bestiary: Mindless Monstrosities

by Greg Bilsland

illustrations by Ben Wootten

Golems and oozes are among the most feared dungeon denizens because of their tireless pursuit of prey. Golems, with their resilient bodies and mindless obedience, make excellent guardians. Long after their masters have passed into the Shadowfell, golems remain devoted to their charge. Abandoned keeps and ancient tombs are rife with such sentinels, and woe to the adventurer who isn't prepared to face one of these tireless constructs.

Although motivated by hunger and not obedience, oozes make equally efficient guardians. With their constant vigilance and search for prey, and a slow metabolism that allows them to endure decades with minimal food, oozes make formidable and determined adversaries. Oozes are near mindless and cannot be tamed, yet they can be coaxed with food easily. Because oozes care nothing for inorganic matter, they are often sealed within treasure vaults, laboratories, and tombs to keep would-be robbers or adventurers from exploring or plundering them.

Crystal Golem

A creature constructed of magically animated shards of crystal, crystal golems are typically paired with more melee-focused guardians.

Crystal Golem Tactics

Crystal golems rely on terrain and allies to keep adversaries at a distance while bombarding foes with *piercing shard* and *shard volley*. They risk opportunity attacks to move out of melee (since they can't shift), and they resort to using their melee basic attack only if cornered. When crystal golems are near death, they try to position themselves where they can cause the most damage with *death burst*.

Crystal Golem	Level 14 Elite Artillery
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 2,000
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 216; **Bloodied** 108; see also *death burst*	
AC 28; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26	
Immune disease, poison	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6; can't shift	
Action Points 1	
(+) **Slash** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Piercing Shard (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10; +21 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).	
Shard Volley (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
The shard golem makes a *piercing shard* attack against each target within range.	
Fractured Body (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy hits the crystal golem with a melee attack; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
The enemy takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Death Burst (when reduced to 0 hit points)	
The crystal golem explodes in a burst of crystal shards. Close burst 2; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d6 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 19 (+11)	**Dex** 14 (+9) **Wis** 8 (+6)
Con 18 (+11)	**Int** 3 (+3) **Cha** 3 (+3)

Crystal Golem Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana or Nature check.

DC 20: Despite their fragile appearance, crystal golems are resilient creatures. They have the ability to create crystalline darts and fire them at enemies up to 50 feet away. In some instances, they can even hit multiple targets with this attack.

DC 25: Engaging a crystal golem in melee is dangerous, for its crystalline body can splinter when hit, sending shards flying into the attacker. These shards embed in an attacker's flesh, causing ongoing pain.

DC 30: As a crystal golem is damaged, large fractures begin to crisscross its body. Upon the killing blow, the golem's crystalline form shatters, sending deadly splinters in all directions.

Sand Golem

The canny sand golems use their evasive natures to engage the most threatening foes they face, avoiding powerful melee combatants when possible.

Sand Golem Tactics

Sand golems are more intelligent than most golems, and their tactics in combat are representative of that cunning. While awaiting an enemy, sand golems often use Stealth to appear as a pile of sand. Once in combat, sand golems seek opportunities to gain combat advantage. They use *evasive slide* whenever possible, and they withhold their use of *sandstorm* until they can gain a position where the attack can hit multiple targets.

Sand Golem Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana or Nature check.

DC 20: Sand golems are incredibly evasive. They move around the battlefield without difficulty.

DC 25: Sand golems have the ability to transform briefly into a sandstorm once during battle.

Rimefire Golem

Rimefire golems are constructed of living ice, and capable of wielding raw elemental cold.

Rimefire Golem Tactics

Rimefire golems are thuggish constructs that rely on deadly physical attacks and sheer attrition to wear down enemies. Rimefire golems wade into combat,

Sand Golem	Level 15 Skirmisher
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 2,400
Initiative +11	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 148; **Bloodied** 74	
AC 29; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 24; see also *evasive slide*	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 6; see also *shifting sands*	
(+) **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 3; +20 vs. AC; 3d6 + 4 damage.	
Sandstorm (standard; encounter)	
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +17 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).	
Evasive Slide (immediate reaction, when a melee attack misses the sand golem; at-will)	
The sand golem shifts 3 squares and gains combat advantage against the creature that missed it.	
Shifting Sands (move; at-will)	
The sand golem can shift up to its speed.	
Skills Stealth + 14	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 22 (+13)	**Dex** 13 (+8) **Wis** 9 (+6)
Con 20 (+12)	**Int** 6 (+5) **Cha** 3 (+3)

immediately using *rimefire burst* at the first opportunity to hit more than one enemy. They then wait until the power recharges, using it again whenever the attack can target more than one creature.

Golem Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Arcana or Nature check.

DC 25: Rimefire golems are constructs forged from the searing ice of the Elemental Chaos. These constructs emit an aura that alters the ground on which they walk, making it slippery and sometimes even fiery.

DC 30: The rimefire golem's aura becomes more dangerous while the creature is bloodied. The creature has little regard for its own safety, and it attempts to position itself where it can use its area attacks with greatest effect.

Crystal golems rely on terrain and their allies to keep adversaries at a distance while they bombard their foes with piercing shard and shard volley.

Rimefire Golem	Level 20 Elite Brute
Large natural animate (construct)	XP 5,600
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +9; darkvision
Icefire Fog (**Cold**) aura 2; enemies treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain; see also *forgefire unleashed*	
HP 468; **Bloodied** 234; see also *forgefire unleashed*	
AC 34; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30	
Immune disease, poison, sleep; **Resist** 10 cold, 10 fire	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6; can't shift	
Action Points 1	
ⓘ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ Cold	
Reach 2; +23 vs. AC; 2d8 + 2 damage, and ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends).	
✧ **Rimefire Sweep** (standard; recharge 5 6) ✦ **Cold**	
The rimefire golem makes a basic attack against each adjacent enemy.	
Forgefire Unleashed (while bloodied)	
The rimefire golem's *icefire fog* aura gains the fire keyword and gains the following effect: an enemy that begins its turn in the aura takes 10 fire damage.	
✧ **Death Burst** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Cold, Fire, Zone**	
The rimefire golem explodes in a burst of fire and ice. Close burst 2; +22 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 7 fire and cold damage. In addition, the area of the burst becomes a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. A creature that begins its turn in the zone takes 10 fire damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 26 (+18)	**Dex** 7 (+8) **Wis** 8 (+9)
Con 24 (+17)	**Int** 3 (+6) **Cha** 3 (+6)

DC 35: The harsh elemental energy used to give life to rimefire golems is highly combustible, and when a rimefire golem is slain, that energy is unleashed in a burst that sears nearby creatures.

Encounter Groups

A golem often serves a powerful lord or lady, who is also a spellcaster or priest. They are obedient guardians, throwing themselves at adversaries without regard for their own health or wellbeing.

Level 14 Encounter (XP 4,800)
- ✦ 1 crystal golem (level 14 elite artillery)
- ✦ 1 minotaur cabalist (level 13 controller)
- ✦ 2 salamander lancers (level 14 brute)

Level 15 Encounter (XP 6,000)
- ✦ 1 sand golem (level 15 elite skirmisher)
- ✦ 2 rakshasa warriors (level 15 soldier)
- ✦ 1 salamander noble (level 15 controller)

Level 20 Encounter (XP 14,000)
- ✦ 1 rimefire golem (level 20 elite brute)
- ✦ 1 ice archon frostshaper (level 20 controller)
- ✦ 2 rimefire griffons (level 20 skirmisher)

Azure Jelly

The deadly azure jelly attacks sees any living creature as a source of food, and uses its cold powers to freeze its prey before devouring it.

Azure Jelly Tactics

An azure jelly moves heedlessly into battle, slamming whatever prey is nearest. When it succeeds at immobilizing a creature, it uses *attach*, attempting to freeze an enemy to death. When first bloodied, an azure jelly unleashes *cold snap*. On its next turn, it targets any immobilized creatures with *attach*. This jelly fights until killed or until it can consume its prey.

Azure Jelly Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature check.

DC 20: Azure jellies emerge spontaneously from cold and icy places that are infused with arcane energy. They commonly occupy dungeons and frigid locations. Azure jellies, like most oozes, are ravenous creatures driven by a hunger that causes them to relentlessly pursue any prey.

Azure Jelly	Level 7 Elite Brute
Medium natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 600
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +4; tremorsense 10
HP 192; **Bloodied** 96; see also *cold snap* below	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20	
Immune gaze; **Resist** 10 cold	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5	
Action Points 1	
ⓘ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
+10 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 cold damage, and the jelly makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +8 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized (save ends).	
ǂ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The azure jelly makes two slam attacks.	
ǂ **Attach** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
Targets an immobilized creature; +10 vs. Fortitude; the target is grabbed (escape ends). While the target is grabbed, that creature takes 10 cold damage at the start of its turn, and when the azure jelly is hit by an attack, the azure jelly takes half damage from the attack and the grabbed creature takes the other half.	
✧ **Cold Snap** (when first bloodied) ✦ **Cold, Zone**	
Close burst 2; targets enemies; +8 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 cold damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its next turn. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. The zone is difficult terrain to creatures other than the azure jelly.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 15 (+5)	**Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 1 (-2) **Cha** 1 (-2)

Shadow Slime

Among the deadliest hunters of the oozes, shadow slimes will wait patiently for food to pass for days, or even weeks at a stretch.

Shadow Slime Tactics

Considered among the most cunning oozes, a shadow slime waits patiently for prey to come to it. This creature then extinguishes a light source, teleports to a creature using *shadow jump*, and strikes. A shadow slime selects a location with dark crevasses

Shadow Slime	Level 10 Elite Lurker
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 1,000
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +7; tremorsense 10
HP 154; **Bloodied** 77	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20; see also *pool of shadows*	
Immune gaze	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
+15 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 necrotic damage.	
⸸ **Drain Life** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**	
+13 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 3 necrotic damage, and the slime regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.	
Engulf in Shadows (minor; at-will)	
One light source (even magical light) within 10 squares of the shadow slime stops producing light until relit.	
Pool of Shadows	
The shadow slime is invisible in areas of dim light or darkness.	
Shadowed Strike	
When the shadow slime hits a creature that cannot see it, the attack deals an extra 2d6 damage and the target loses 1 healing surge.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Skills Athletics + 12, Stealth +14	
Str 15 (+7)	**Dex** 18 (+9)	**Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 17 (+8)	**Int** 1 (+0)	**Cha** 1 (+0)

and plenty of room to maneuver. It tries to divide prey and target those near the edge of the light.

Shadow Slime Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature check.

DC 20: Originally oozes of the Shadowfell, shadow slimes have gained a presence in the mortal world. They are one of the more cunning oozes, and they prefer stealth and alacrity to brute force.

DC 25: Shadow slimes have the power to extinguish lights, which they use to great advantage to drive their prey into disarray. They also drain the life force of those creatures they strike, rejuvenating themselves in the process.

Iridescent Ooze

Patient ambushers, iridescent oozes have the power to force prey to come directly to them.

Iridescent Ooze Tactics

Iridescent oozes wait until prey approaches. Then they position themselves to unleash *prismatic shock*. These oozes then concentrate on dazed opponents, attempting to mark them and other nearby creatures using slam attacks. Once oozes have two or more marked opponents, they use *alluring colors* to draw them close and keep them within reach.

Iridescent Ooze Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature check.

DC 25: Iridescent oozes are ambushers. They like to lie in wait and surprise an enemy, catching them unaware and keeping them close where they can be engulfed. Iridescent oozes have a dazzling array of colors that play across their slimy surface, drawing enemies to them with a hypnotic effect.

Encounter Groups

Oozes inhabit dungeons and other locales with all kinds of denizens, though often such creatures are undead, difficult to catch, or otherwise inedible.

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,200)

- ✦ 1 shadow slime (level 10 elite lurker)
- ✦ 2 zombie hulks (level 8 brute)
- ✦ 1 skeletal tomb guardian (level 10 brute)

Iridescent Ooze	Level 13 Elite Soldier
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	XP 1,600
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +9; tremorsense 20
HP 258; **Bloodied** 129; see also *prismatic shock*	
AC 29; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26	
Immune gaze	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 4	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target is marked (save ends).	
⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The iridescent ooze makes a slam attack against two different targets.	
⊹ **Alluring Colors** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Acid, Charm**	
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Will; the target is pulled 2 squares. If the target is marked by the iridescent ooze, it is pulled 4 squares. Any creature marked by the iridescent ooze and in a square adjacent to the iridescent ooze is grabbed and gains ongoing 10 acid damage (escape ends both).	
Prismatic Shock (encounter; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Radiant**	
Close burst 2; +18 vs. Will; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the iridescent ooze's next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 20 (+11)	**Dex** 15 (+8)	**Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 17 (+9)	**Int** 1 (+1)	**Cha** 1 (+1)

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,000)

- ✦ 1 iridescent ooze (level 13 elite soldier)
- ✦ 1 beholder eye of flame (level 13 elite artillery)
- ✦ 4 horde ghouls (level 13 minion)

About the Author

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Playing Gnolls

by Keith Baker

illustrations by Stephen Crowe

"SAIRA?" Faris said. A cloud had passed over the moon, and the woods around him were a maze of shadows. Saira's voice had drawn him away from the campfire, but each time she called, it seemed to come from a new direction; he just couldn't pin it down. "Saira, what's wrong?"

"I need you . . ." Her voice was weak, rough—it was clear she was in pain. "Help me . . . please, help me . . ."

She was straight ahead of him. Faris pressed forward, thrashing his way through briars and vines. Then his foot caught on something and he stumbled, falling across a soft and wet mass—a human body with skin cold to the touch and blood matting her hair. It was Saira's corpse.

"I need you." It was her voice, rough and pained, but it wasn't Saira who spoke. The speaker towered over Faris, a bloody axe clutched in one hand. Sharp teeth gleamed as the gnoll burst into laughter—a mocking, fluting cry that was quickly echoed on all sides as others stepped out of the woods. The moon broke through the clouds just in time to catch the blade of the gnoll's axe as it rose and fell, silencing Faris's cries.

Gnoll legends trace the origin of their species to the demon prince Yeenoghu. Known as the Beast of Butchery and Ruler of Ruin, Yeenoghu sought to spread his hand across the mortal world by creating an army that would sow discord and terror across civilized lands. His demons

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numbered too few and could not remain in the mortal world indefinitely. But Yeenoghu took a few of his mightiest and most savage demons and fed them to a pack of mortal hyenas. The essence of the demons fused with the animals, and their children were the first of the gnolls—fierce humanoid creatures combining the traits of cunning hyena and vicious fiend. Yeenoghu charged the gnolls to spread horror in his name, bathing the lands in blood and bringing suffering to all things unfortunate enough to cross paths with the Children of Yeenoghu. Through this butchery, they earn a place of honor in the domain of the demon prince.

This is the tale gnoll mothers tell their pups and the story the scourge uses to exhort his troops. Whether it is truth or mere legend, it is easy to see the inspiration for the myth. A gnoll looks much like a humanoid hyena and shares many traits with the animal, including its haunting laughter. And the strength and savagery of these creatures is enough to suggest demonic blood; the typical gnoll band strikes without fear or mercy, tearing into enemies with the fury of fiends incarnate.

Feral Fiends

Beyond the mechanics, what makes a gnoll marauder different from an orc raider or hobgoblin soldier? All three are dangerous foes that might oppose the PCs. So what defines the gnoll?

All gnolls share certain traits. There is a strong, instinctive bond between gnolls of the same bloodline. Gnoll clans can and do fight one another, and they see struggles for dominance within a clan, but pack mentality is a powerful force within gnoll life. This is reflected in battle: Gnolls are pack hunters who work together to bring down their prey, ganging up on an enemy instead of striving for individual glory. Beyond this, gnolls are shaped by two forces: the primal nature of the hyena, and the pure malevolence of the demon. When you develop a gnoll clan, consider which aspect is at the fore and let that be your guide.

The Butcher's Brood

The gnoll followers of Yeenoghu embrace the fury of the fiend, which results in their legendary brutality. Aggression is a tangible force within the soul of the gnoll. A demonic desire to shed blood and spread chaos drives gnolls toward the chaotic evil alignment. Such gnolls do not claim lands of their own; instead they live in nomadic bands accompanied by hyenas and slaves, wandering the frontiers and fringes of civilized nations in search of prey. They attack any traveler or settlement they believe they can defeat, and the only people who survive such an attack are those taken as prey. This is no mercy. Gnoll prisoners are tortured physically and psychologically; every clan has slavers (known as *tantekurash*, or "spirit breakers") who specialize in this work. These gnolls possess the insight to ferret out weaknesses and to spot when a victim has truly given in or when a spark of hope remains. Those who cannot be broken are soon devoured by their carnivorous captors, typically in front of other prisoners as a further act of torment. Those who surrender become slaves and are forced to maintain the camps of the nomadic gnolls between raids. Those who excel at this work might be kept alive; otherwise, they eventually are consumed by their vicious masters.

Although the experience is a horrific one that can leave scars on those who survive it, it is still possible to rescue someone from such slavery. It might take weeks or months for a victim to recover, but eventually they shake off the horror. But an unfortunate few fall into a deeper abyss. Broken by the horrors they have witnessed, they respond by embracing what they have seen and devoting the remnants of their lives to Yeenoghu. Known as *kryshtantel* ("savage souls" in the Abyssal tongue favored by these gnolls), these slaves accompany the gnolls into battle. Most of the savage souls are little better than beasts; the gnolls treat them much the same as the trained hyenas they hunt with. A rare few embrace the creed of the Beast of Butchery with their intelligence intact, effectively becoming gnolls in human form. These savage souls are the most dangerous of all; they travel ahead of the clan in search of victims, evaluate the defenses of villages, and perform acts of sabotage before their gnoll "kin" strike.

For the gnolls of Yeenoghu, cruelty and bloodshed are a source of joy and a reason for living. They have no interest in conquest. They don't seek honor or glory. They revel in the hunt and kill. Gnolls take great pleasure in life, and a gnoll victory feast is a wild frenzy of celebration.

The pack instinct of the gnoll remains strong among the Butcher's Brood, and they rarely turn on their own. However, this loyalty doesn't extend to other clans. Gnolls might form temporary alliances to take down a powerful target or if the scourges say it is the will of Yeenoghu. Clans of equal strength could agree to take separate paths, ensuring they won't compete for the same prey. But should a clan come upon a wounded or weaker clan, odds are good that they treat it like any other potential prey; the lessons of the Ruler of Ruin are hard and bloody.

Yeenoghu's children enjoy large-scale acts of destruction, and the clan as a whole massacres villages and settlements. However, gnolls enjoy the hunt as well as the slaughter, and occasionally a smaller pack splits off from the main clan in search of diversion. Although such a group might attack a party of adventurers outright, they might also use mimicry or other tricks to split up a party, drawing out the conflict. Gnolls occasionally choose to let prisoners escape so that they can hunt them down again; such

a refugee could stumble across the path of a group of PCs, with the gnolls in near pursuit.

If the PCs are clearly too powerful for the gnolls to defeat, they do not engage in a frontal assault, but they might make a sport of trying to kill the former prisoner by refusing to engage the PCs directly and sniping at the innocent.

The Soul of the Hyena

Gnolls agree that Yeenoghu crafted their race from demon and beast. But not all gnolls worship the Beast of Butchery. Though the fury of the fiend runs through the blood of the gnoll, some reject this demonic heritage and find solace in the spirit of the hyena that lies within them. Over the course of generations, this has produced clans of gnolls that are less savage than the Butcher's Brood. Typically unaligned as opposed to chaotic evil, these gnolls still live as nomadic hunters on the fringes of society. However, they are more likely to hunt wild beasts than civilized creatures, and they take no joy in torture or unnecessary cruelty. These gnolls still love the thrill of the hunt, especially when tracking together with others of their pack; it is this that keeps them tied to the wild life, instead of settling down to form static communities. But they do not attack peaceful villages without serious provocation. They love to hunt and track—not to slaughter.

Such gnolls usually come to terms with the humans or other settlers who share their lands, and they might sell their services as trappers or hunters. Although they trade with members of other species, gnolls prefer the company of their own kind, along with their hyena companions. They do not take slaves, and while they do not kill peaceful humans who come to their camps, neither do they make them feel welcome. These gnolls are still predators and carnivores; while they are not quick to anger, a visitor to a gnoll camp would be wise to mind his manners.

When dealing with these gnolls, think of how their primal nature might play into their personalities. A gnoll is more comfortable in the wilds than in a town. He is a pack animal and prefers the company of his kin to solitude. Like the hyena, he is content to scavenge others' kills—but like the hyena, he is a hunter and predator, ready to fight if provoked. Gnolls that follow the path of the hyena make excellent rangers; they might lack the brutal talents of the torturer of Yeenoghu, but they typically have excellent Nature and Perception skills. At the DM's discretion, a gnoll that follows this path can exchange the standard +2 racial bonus to Intimidate checks for a +2 racial bonus to Nature checks.

Curious Creatures

Whether they draw on their primal heritage or fiendish blood, all gnolls share many unusual traits. Many of these relate to their similarity to the hyena; others are unique to the gnolls.

Bone Eaters: Gnolls are carnivores. Like the hyenas they resemble, gnolls possess strong jaws and powerful digestive juices, which allows them to consume and digest almost every part of their prey, including teeth and bones. When the Butcher's Brood strikes a village, it's not just a case of leaving no survivors—they don't even leave corpses. Gnolls have no aversion to eating carrion, and stories speak of wandering gnolls digging up graveyards and consuming the corpses; such tales posit a connection between Yeenoghu and Doresain, the demon prince of ghouls.

Gender Issues: The physical build of a female gnoll is almost identical to that of its male counterpart, and in many clans the females are larger than the males. As a rule, it is difficult for a member of another race to tell the gender of a gnoll unless it's pregnant or actively nursing. Females and males are equally aggressive, and both males and females actively take part in hunting. Although the leader of the clan is typically the strongest gnoll (male or female), lineage is usually traced through the mother.

Because of the difficulty involved in identifying the gender of a gnoll, there are folktales based around the idea that gnolls are hermaphrodites or can change their gender; however, neither of these things are true.

Friendly Intimidation: Humans typically find that even friendly gnolls seem aggressive. When performed correctly, gnolls do not consider intimidation to be a hostile act; instead, the speaker is asserting its strength and seeking to establish its place in the pack hierarchy. One of the simple ways that this comes across is that a gnoll almost never makes requests; when possible, it makes demands,

or at the least firm statements. Instead of "Can I help you?" the gnoll says "Tell me what you want!"—pushing the target to take action.

Childish Games: Gnolls aggression starts young. As soon as a gnoll pup is capable of walking, it starts fighting with other young gnolls. Pups seek out small tunnels that adults can't fit into; in these mazes, they fight to the death. This practice weeds out weaker gnolls, but it also keeps their numbers down—one reason these vicious creations don't pose more of a threat to the world at large.

The Voice in the Darkness: Folktales say that gnolls can mimic voices to lure enemies into danger. And there is truth to these tales; the Butcher's Lure feat allows a gnoll to use the *ghost sound* cantrip at will. Some say this is a gift of the gnolls' demonic blood, a weapon forged by the Ruler of Ruin—and the power is more common among the clans of Yeenoghu. However, there is nothing innately evil about the power itself. Any NPC gnoll can possess this power, at the DM's discretion; a PC gnoll can acquire it by taking the feat.

The Language of Demons: The gnoll language is the strongest evidence supporting the theory that gnolls have fiendish blood. Gnolls have an innate knack for the Abyssal language; even if a pup is raised outside gnoll society, the words come to the gnoll from dreams and vague memories. Gnolls also have a knack for the path of the infernal pact warlock. This need not reflect service to Yeenoghu; some gnolls find that they have a gift for harnessing the infernal power that lies latent in their blood, which is a gift of distant demonic heritage.

The Company of Hyenas

Gnolls have a strong affinity for hyenas, and gnoll clans are accompanied by hyena families that have been with the clan for generations. Every clan has at least one gnoll who specializes in training the creatures. Between this training and instinctive empathy, hyenas work closely with their gnoll companions in battle, using their *harrier* and *pack attack* abilities to bring down enemies.

Gnolls who embrace their fiendish heritage are found in the company of cacklefiend hyenas (*Monster Manual*, page 166). Stories say that gnolls breed with these beasts—but little evidence exists to back this up.

Religion

The common religion of the gnolls is the worship of Yeenoghu, the Ruler of Ruin. The gnolls of the Butcher's Brood are fanatically devoted to their demon prince. They believe that his blood flows through their veins, and beyond this, that their devotion justifies every terrible atrocity they commit. The more philosophical among them believe that they were created to scourge the weak from the face of the world—that through their merciless destruction, they serve a higher place. It is this belief that gives the gnoll leaders their name: the demonic scourges who lead the other gnolls into battle.

Despite their devotion to Yeenoghu, gnolls have little interest in ritual, and few priests or shamans are among them. Their devotions are acts of slaughter, and any gnoll can consecrate a murder to the demon lord. They paint the eye of Yeenoghu on weapons and armor so he can see what ruin is wrought in his name, plus they howl his name in battle, and that is usually enough. However, a few clan leaders follow the path of the infernal warlock, drawing fearsome powers from their pacts with the Beast of Butchery. Guided by visions from Yeenoghu, these gnolls perform frightful rituals. One of the most horrifying is the Corruption of the Soul Consumed. Living victims are devoured by cacklefiend hyenas, who then swiftly give birth to litters of newborn demons—evistros or barlguras formed from the tormented souls of the victims.

Those gnolls that turn away from Yeenoghu follow many paths. Some see the deities as being no different from demons, and they refuse to worship any higher power. Such gnolls seek to strengthen their bond to the natural world, searching for connection to a primal force deeper than they can have with any divine power. However, some gnolls have embraced the worship of the common gods. The Black Moon Clan is sworn to the Raven Queen, and her followers stain their fur with dark dyes. The Storm Chasers revere Kord. A number of clans are dedicated to Melora. The best of these hunt aberrations in her name, seeking to drive unnatural beasts from the wilds. But all too many take the message of Melora to extremes; in their efforts to protect the wilderness from the forces of civilization, they can be as merciless as the Butcher's Brood.

Scavenging

Like the hyenas they resemble, gnolls have no qualms about scavenging the kills of other predators as a source of food. But for the gnolls, scavenging plays a deeper cultural role. The gnolls of Yeenoghu create little of their own; the vast majority of their belongings are things they have claimed from their kills. Few among the Butcher's Brood have any gift for metalworking, and they rely on victories and heirlooms as a source of arms and armor. This creates an unusual aesthetic to gnoll armor, which is largely pieced together from multiple victims. Gnoll chainmail is rarely a single shirt, but rather strips torn from multiple corpses and sewn haphazardly onto leather; a single plate pauldron might be included in the suit.

In part, this is a practical action. The gnolls need weapons and armor for their bloody work, and the

goods of their victims are better than anything they could make themselves. But there is also a social significance to it. The children of Yeenoghu believe that they were placed on the world to slaughter lesser creatures, and that their place in the afterlife is determined by their kills. The things they scavenge from their fallen foes are trophies of these victories. The gnoll who wears haphazard chainmail remembers the story of each strip of metal and enjoys reminiscing about each kill. Its patchwork armor is a map of its life and achievements. Some gnolls prefer less practical tokens; a gnoll might take a fingerbone from each victim, wearing these on bracelets or even binding them to the haft of its weapon. But almost everything a gnoll owns has a story—and almost all of it is scavenged.

Those gnolls who have turned from the demon's path are more civilized than the Butcher's Brood, and so they might make their own weapons and armor. However, they still keep trophies of difficult hunts or great victories. This could range from the tooth of a fallen beast to a single ring of chainmail from a human enemy. Gnoll trackers focus on scent, keeping strips of cloth that they have rubbed in the sweat and blood of a fallen foe; in peaceful moments they choose a strip and savor the scent, reminiscing about the glorious battle.

Gnolls in Other Settings

The Children of Yeenoghu can find a place in almost any campaign. Even if Yeenoghu is not present in the world, the basic principle can still stand: offspring of an ancient blend of demon and hyena that roams the wilds and preys on those unfortunate enough to cross their path.

However, a particular setting can suggest a different path for gnolls. In the *Eberron Campaign Setting*, gnolls served as soldiers in the Age of Demons, and savage gnolls still roam the Demon Wastes and other wild lands. However, in the region of Droaam, gnolls turned their backs on their barbaric past. The scourges gathered together at Znir and shattered the great statue of their demon lord; together, the clan leaders pledged to find a new path for their people and to stand together. Droaam is a dangerous land, and, if not for this alliance, clans would likely have been enslaved by giants, oni, or other powerful creatures. But thanks to the Znir Pact, the gnolls have become a stabilizing force respected by all the warlords—a force that has considerable influence in the young nation. In many ways, the gnolls of the Pact are similar to those who follow the path of the hyena, as described earlier. But they are more organized than their wild kin, and gnolls of different clans stand by one another. Although they prefer the company of their own bloodline, the gnolls of Droaam consider all gnolls to be united under the Pact, and they know that it is this unity that has allowed them to prosper in Droaam. They maintain the strong pack instinct found in all gnolls, but they have extended this loyalty to the entire pact.

This is just one example of a different path that gnolls could follow. When adding gnolls to a setting, consider the things that make them unique: the aspects of the hyena and ancient demon blood. Does the setting you're developing have an especially interesting path for either of these? Is there a different demon lord or evil god who could take the place of Yeenoghu? Or might the different gnoll tribes be agents of independent demons, with the actions of the gnolls in the mortal world affecting the balance of power in the underworld? Alternatively, you could abandon the demon connection entirely and make them feral defenders of the wild—furious guardians who battle orc and elf alike in an effort to preserve the sanctity of nature.

Leaving the Pack: Gnoll PCs

Gnolls can be interesting player characters. The question the player needs to answer is why the gnoll has split from its clan, leaving the wilds to live among humans and their cities. Here are a few paths to consider.

The Fugitive: Among the Children of Yeenoghu, the greatest crime is compassion. There is no room for mercy in the Butcher's Brood, and a gnoll who lets victims live is stealing blood and souls from the Ruler of Ruin. The fugitive is a rare gnoll who turned against a fiendish upbringing and found light in the darkness. Perhaps this happened while killing a spirit breaker to help prisoners escape or perhaps the gnoll turned of its own accord in the midst of a massacre. Whatever the crime, the fugitive is now hunted by its own clan.

The Exile: The exile might have similar roots to the fugitive—the gnoll who turned against the savage ways of its people. But it is not being hunted. This gnoll is the child of a powerful scourge, and Yeenoghu has shown her visions of the PC's destiny. She claims that her offspring will become the greatest scourge of all, spreading blood and terror across the land—and that this time of wandering is part of this destiny. The exile has been branded with a mark that speaks of its destiny, and the gnolls of its clan do not hunt it—nor do they have anything to do with the exile until its time for it to become a monster of legend. Can the PC become a hero? Or is it the exile's epic destiny to become the right hand of a demon prince, spreading terror across the land? This is an especially interesting path for an infernal pact warlock. Your power is drawn from your demonic heritage—by developing it, are you committing yourself to the dark path?

The Gladiator: Gnolls are powerful warriors, and in lands that have yet to outlaw slavery, gnoll pups can fetch a healthy price. The gladiator was raised to

fight and kill, and to use its feral instincts to earn gold for its master. Perhaps it escaped captivity; perhaps the gladiator killed its master and ran. Either way, the gladiator has lived a harsh and brutal life, and it has seen little to love in the human world. This gnoll is grim and stoic—but perhaps its PC companions can help the gladiator find hope and a reason to live besides slaughter.

The Orphan: This gnoll was found as a child and raised by members of another race. As such, it hasn't inherited the brutal ways of its ancestors; despite its frightening appearance, this gnoll can follow almost any path imaginable. At the same time, it might find strange and savage instincts lurking in its soul. One of these is the Abyssal tongue, which comes to it unbidden. This gnoll might discover that it is an effort to restrain itself in battle and that its blood calls it to slaughter. Can the orphan ignore these primal impulses, or will they drag it down?

Whatever draws a gnoll away from its clan, many instincts remain. The pack is a powerful force for a gnoll, and it is difficult for a gnoll to be alone. Whether exile or orphan, a gnoll is drawn to find companions; this makes a gnoll a natural member of an adventuring party which will become its surrogate clan. Although a gnoll is likely to test and challenge other members of the party at first, seeking to establish a clear social hierarchy, once that is in place it will likely be loyal to its friends, to the point of laying down its life for its chosen pack.

The aggressive behavior and fearsome appearance of a gnoll can be difficult to deal with—but if you earn the friendship of a gnoll, you will find it to be a powerful bond.

Fierce and feral, the gnolls are truly creatures of the wild. Driven by predatory instincts and the ancient touch of demon blood, gnolls are deadly hunters. They prefer to roam with their packs on the edges of civilization, and those who lose their clans might choose to create a new pack by joining a band of adventurers.

Play a gnoll if you want . . .

- ✦ to be a fierce hunter driven by instinct.
- ✦ to be an outsider in the civilized world—a scion of a race known for its cruelty and brutality.
- ✦ to be swift and deadly, striking enemies with surprising force.
- ✦ to be a member of a race that favors the rogue, ranger, and warlock classes.

Physical Qualities

Gnolls tower over humans, with the average gnoll standing over 7 feet tall. Despite their physical strength, gnolls are lean; gnolls are rarely musclebound, and they move with remarkable speed. Their eyes are bright green or yellow, and gleam whenever they catch the light. Gnolls are covered with a thick coat of fur, which generally ranges from light to dark brown; depending on the clan, this might be a uniform color, or broken up by stripes or spots. A number of gnoll bloodlines have members (both male and female) who possess crestlike manes of hair that run from the head and down the spine; these rise up when gnolls are frightened or angry.

Although these are general traits, the traces of demonic blood in gnolls can produce unusual features. An obvious example of this are the talons of the gnoll claw fighter, but this can manifest in lesser ways. A gnoll might have gleaming red eyes, or black fur with fiery orange spots; a wide range of variation is possible.

Gnolls mature with remarkable speed for intelligent humanoids; some cite this as proof of their demonic heritage and suggest that it is unnatural for a creature to be ready for battle so soon after birth. They have short life spans—in fact, they rarely live longer than thirty years, but they typically remain remarkably strong and vigorous right up to the end of their days. When their strength leaves them, it is a sudden and catastrophic decline.

Playing a Gnoll

Gnolls are primal creatures, and instinct plays a powerful role in their lives. Pack and family bonds are important to them, and while they might squabble to establish lines of dominance, between such challenges gnolls are steadfast allies. In battle, gnolls are strong team players, and they set aside any thought of personal glory to assist an ally. When separated from their own kind, gnolls seek a surrogate pack and are loyal to those they choose as friends.

Gnoll behavior seems aggressive to other creatures; a gnoll is more likely to demand an answer than ask a question. Among gnolls, this sort of intimidation isn't considered a hostile act; it is a way of establishing strength.

Gnolls are natural predators, and they love the thrill of the chase and the challenge of the hunt. Most prefer the wilds to civilization, but some adapt and come to see the city as another sort of jungle. Gnolls are natural scavengers, and they love to collect trophies of their victories and experiences; these can range from grisly remnants to simple objects that remind them of an event.

Tales say that gnolls were born of the blending of beast and demon, and this is something that should be kept in mind with any gnoll character. The ferocity of the fiend lies within even the noblest gnoll, and this could manifest in many ways.

Gnoll Characteristics: Aggressive, carnivorous, cunning, feral, fierce, loyal, predatory, primal, swift, tough, wild

Male Gnoll Names: Dagnyr, Dhyrn, Doryc, Ghyrryn, Gnasc, Gnoryc, Gnyrn, Hyrn, Lhoryn, Lhyr, Mognyr, Sorgnyn, Thyrn, Toryc, Yrgnyn, Yrych

Female Gnoll Names: Dagnyra, Gnara, Gnora, Gnyrl, Hyra, Hyrgna, Lhyra, Lhyrl, Malgna, Myrl, Sargna, Shyrla, Tarnyra, Yrgna

Gnoll

RACIAL TRAITS
Average Height: 7' 0" - 7' 6"
Average Weight: 280-320 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Constitution, +2 Dexterity
Size: Medium
Speed: 7 squares
Vision: Low-light

Languages: Abyssal, Common
Skill Bonuses: +2 Intimidate, +2 Perception
Blood Fury: While you're bloodied, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls. This increases to a +4 bonus at 21st level.
Pack Attack: You deal an extra 2 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more of your allies adjacent to it.
Ferocious Charge: You can use ferocious charge as an encounter power.

Ferocious Charge — **Gnoll Racial Power**

You lunge toward the enemy and, with a tirade of curses, unleash the wrath of Yeenoghu upon your hapless foe.

Encounter
Standard Action — **Personal**

Effect: You charge, and deal an extra 2 damage on a successful attack. Increase the extra damage to 4 at 11th level and 6 at 21st level. If you are bloodied, double the extra damage and gain an equal number of temporary hit points.

Gnoll Adventurers

Three sample gnoll adventurers are described below.

Dagnyr is a gnoll ranger. His clan turned from the path of Yeenoghu and swore themselves to the goddess Melora, only to be slaughtered a generation later by their own demon-worshiping kin. As the last of his clan, Dagnyr opposed all demon cultists—both the gnolls who slaughtered his pack and humans who follow the infernal path.

Lhyra is a gnoll rogue whose strength and speed make her a force to be reckoned with. Taken as a child and raised in the arena, she had to learn to kill or be killed. When her captors finally dropped their guard, she killed them and escaped, living a feral life in the alleys of the great city. Now she has found a new pack in her fellow adventurers, and she has sworn to use her deadly talents to protect her new family.

Hyrn is a gnoll warlock raised in the Butcher's Brood. Prophecies say that he will become a mighty servant of Yeenoghu and scourge the world, but he has a strange streak of compassion for a gnoll and fled his fate. His infernal powers have continued to grow, but he has sought to defy destiny by using these gifts for noble purposes; nonetheless, he can feel the darkness of the demon roiling within him, and he fears what he could become.

Options for Gnolls

The *Monster Manual* provides gnolls with a number of interesting abilities that are not automatically possessed by gnoll player characters. The following racial feats provide gnoll PCs with a way to develop their pack tactics or demonic heritage.

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of any level who meets the prerequisites.

Butcher's Lure

Prerequisite: Gnoll

Benefit: You can use *ghost sound* as an at-will ability and gain a +2 feat bonus to Bluff checks when using *ghost sound* to mimic specific people or sounds.

Carrion Eater

Prerequisite: Gnoll

Benefit: You receive a +4 feat bonus to saving throws against poison and Endurance checks made to resist disease.

Claw Fighter

Prerequisite: Gnoll

Benefit: You possess vicious claws, which you can use as weapons with a +3 proficiency bonus and 1d6 damage. For purpose of powers and feats, you can treat your claws as light blades, and you are considered to have a weapon in each hand. You cannot enchant your claws.

Gnoll Tracker

Prerequisite: Gnoll

Benefit: You gain a +5 feat bonus to Perception checks made to track and to Insight checks made to penetrate an illusion or disguise. You can use this bonus during a skill challenge if you can convince the DM that scent is relevant to the check.

Paragon Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Fierce Charge

Prerequisites: 11th level, gnoll, *ferocious charge* racial power

Benefit: When you use your *ferocious charge* power, you can choose to make an at-will melee attack instead of a melee basic attack.

Swift Bite

Prerequisite: 11th level, gnoll

Benefit: When you bloody a foe, you can choose to deal an extra 1d6 + Strength modifier damage with a bite against the target.

Epic Feats

The feat in the following section is available to a character of 21st level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Brutal Charge

Prerequisites: 21st level, gnoll, *ferocious charge* racial power, Fierce Charge

Benefit: When you use your *ferocious charge* power, you can choose to make an encounter melee attack power instead of a melee basic attack.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of Dungeons & Dragons® since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron® to the Wizards of the Coast® Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the *Eberron Campaign Setting* and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

PRIMORDIAL PATHS

BY GREG BILSLAND

illustrations by Ryan Barger

A SWORDMAGE WIELDS an arsenal of elemental attacks. Brandishing a blade infused with arcane energy, a swordmage is a force to be reckoned with. A character can unleash an inferno upon enemies one round and launch a frosty assault the next. And although this gamut of powers can be a boon when faced with enemies resistant to a particular element, it also hinders one's ability to specialize with a particular element. If, for example, a player wanted to fashion a swordmage as a pyromancer, he or she would find no choices conducive to this path at 3rd, 5th, or 9th levels. This article provides elemental-based powers across the Heroic tier to fill in the gaps, and offers a path for feats and attack powers to maximize one's elemental potential. The section below also provides additional utility powers to help support your elemental theme.

Each of these "primordial paths" is based upon a feat available in the *Player's Handbook*. Unless otherwise described here, all powers come from the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*.

RAGING STORM	BURNING BLIZZARD	ASTRAL FIRE
Level 1		
Lightning Lure (at-will)	*Frigid Blade* (at-will, see below)	*Greenflame Blade* (at-will)
Booming Blade (at-will)	*Swordburst* (at-will)	*Swordburst* (at-will)
Lightning Clash (encounter)	*Chilling Blow* (encounter)	*Flame Cyclone* (encounter)
Dimensional Thunder (daily, see below)	*Frost Backlash* (daily)	*Burning Blade* (daily, see below)
Feat: Raging Storm (*PH* 200)	Feat: Burning Blizzard (*PH* 194)	Feat: Astral Fire (*PH* 193)
Level 3		
Blackbast Swipe (encounter)	*Sloth Strike* (encounter)	*Incendiary Sword* (encounter, see below)
Level 5		
Lingering Lightning (daily)	*Deep Freeze* (daily)	*Shielding Fire* (daily, see below)
Level 7		
Electrified Lash (encounter)	*Sleet Strike* (encounter, see below)	*Flamewall Strike* (encounter)
Level 9		
Lightning Strider (daily, see below)	*Icy Sweep* (daily, see below)	*Leaping Flames* (daily, see below)

Level 1 Swordmage At-Will Spells

Frigid Blade — Swordmage Attack 1

Your weapon leaves a frosty trail as it cuts through the air and strikes with a blow that inflicts winter's wrath.

At-Will ✦ Arcane, Cold, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: [W] + Intelligence modifier cold damage. If the target starts its next turn adjacent to you, it takes a penalty to speed equal to your Constitution modifier until the end of its next turn.

Increase damage to 2[W] + Intelligence modifier at 21st level.

Level 1 Swordmage Daily Spells

Dimensional Thunder — Swordmage Attack 1

As you pass unseen through dimensional space, you leave in your wake a thunderous roar that bombards enemies upon your arrival.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Teleportation, Thunder, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Effect: Teleport a number of squares equal to your Constitution modifier.
Hit: 2[W] + Intelligence modifier thunder damage.
Effect: Each enemy adjacent to you gains ongoing 5 thunder damage (save ends).

Level 2 Swordmage Utility Spells

Elemental Aegis — Swordmage Utility 2

You raise an aegis in your ally's defense, infusing the shield with elemental energy to help defend against certain attacks.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Immediate Interrupt **Close** burst 10
Trigger: An enemy you have marked attacks an ally.
Target: One ally in burst.
Effect: Choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. Your ally gains resistance to that damage type equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier until the end of your next turn.

Level 3 Swordmage Encounter Spells

Incendiary Sword — Swordmage Attack 3

Your weapon ignites with flames as you launch it toward your enemies. Upon striking the ground, it explodes and consumes the area in flames.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Standard Action **Area** burst 1 within 5 squares
Requirement: You must throw your melee weapon at the origin square.
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and the target takes 5 fire damage if it makes an attack that does not include you on its next turn.
Effect: Your weapon reforms in your hand.

Level 5 Swordmage Daily Spells

Shielding Fire — Swordmage Attack 5

A gout of flame springs from your sword, searing your enemy and threatening to consume it in deadlier flames.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Standard Action **Close** burst 10
Target: One creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + Constitution modifier fire damage, and the creature is marked as if from your Swordmage Aegis power until the end of the encounter. This does not end existing marks placed by your Swordmage Aegis power, and using your Swordmage Aegis power to mark another enemy does not end this mark. Another creature's mark supersedes this one.
Miss: The creature is marked as if from your Swordmage Aegis power until the end of the encounter. This does not end existing marks placed by your Swordmage Aegis power, and using your Swordmage Aegis power to mark another enemy does not end this mark. Another creature's mark supersedes this one.
Aegis of Shielding: Until the end of the encounter, when you reduce the damage the target deals using *aegis of shielding*, the target takes fire damage equal to the amount of damage your *aegis of shielding* power prevents.

Level 6 Swordmage Utility Spells

Variable Defense — Swordmage Utility 6

You summon the strength of the elements to shield you from damage.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. You have resistance to that damage type equal to your Constitution modifier. As a minor action, you can change the type of resistance to any other listed damage type. This resistance lasts until the end of the encounter.

Level 7 Swordmage Encounter Spells

Sleet Strike — Swordmage Attack 7

Your chill blade sends a rain of frozen rain cascading over your enemy, inhibiting its ability to move without slipping.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Cold, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature.
Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier cold damage. The target and each enemy adjacent to the target fall prone after shifting until the end of your next turn.

Level 9 Swordmage Daily Spells

Leaping Flames — Swordmage Attack 9

Your attack gives life to a tenacious flame that pursues and burns your enemies long after the initial foe shakes it off.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Standard Action **Ranged** 20
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends, see below).
Effect: When a creature saves against the ongoing damage from this power, place leaping flames in a square adjacent to that creature. When a creature is in the same square as leaping flames, that creature gains ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends) and you remove leaping flames from the board. This process continues until the end of the encounter, at which point the flames disappear. A creature can be affected by these flames only once in an encounter. If no creature is currently affected by the flames, move the flames 1 square at the start of your turn.
Miss: Half damage, and no ongoing fire damage.

Icy Sweep — Swordmage Attack 9

As your weapon sweeps toward your enemy's feet, it creates an icy patch along the ground that sends your enemy slipping toward another nearby patch of ground.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Cold, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Constitution modifier cold damage, and you slide the target into any square adjacent to you.
Miss: Half damage, and do not slide the target.

Lightning Strider — Swordmage Attack 9

Your body becomes like a bolt of lightning as you shoot from enemy to enemy, launching attack after attack.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Lightning, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Effect: Teleport 4 squares
Primary Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier lightning damage.
Effect: You can teleport 3 squares, and then make a secondary attack.
Secondary Target: One creature other than the primary target.
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] lightning damage.
Effect: You can teleport 2 squares, and then make a tertiary attack.
Tertiary Target: One creature other than the primary and secondary targets.
Tertiary Attack: Intelligence vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] lightning damage.

About the Author

Greg Bilsland is a game editor and contract writer at Wizards of the Coast. His writing credits include the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide* and several *D&D Insider™* articles. When he's not working, he spends much of his free time writing speculative fiction in one of Seattle's many coffee shops.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

Hall of the Frostmaiden

BY BRIAN R. JAMES

illustrations by Ron Lemen

Self reliance is your only ally. Society, community, family—these fallacies stifle the pursuit of one's own happiness. Warmth and companionship are weaknesses of the flesh, leading to sloth and gluttony. Harden your body yet remain swift on your feet. Embrace your cold-hearted nature and demand respect of your inferiors. These are the tenets of the Storm-bringer, carried aloft by chill winds. Heed these principles and you could come to know the Frostmaiden's caress.

—Excerpt from the Icedawn Syllabus, penned by Demetrios Whitefire of Sossal, High Chillbringer of Auril, Year of the Elves' Weeping (1462 DR)

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DEEP WILDS

Beyond the ken of most mortals exists an otherworldly dominion of fantastic terrain dominated by untamed wilderness and populated by all manner of feral beasts and faerie folk. The Deep Wilds epitomizes the raw unfettered force of nature—a savage expanse that liberates the spirit and brings out the beast in all who spend too much time there.

Every type of natural environment that exists on Toril is exemplified here. Desert, savannah, meadow, steppe, jungle, forest, marsh, frozen tundra—all these and more exist in the Deep Wilds. Even the weather is as wild as the plane's inhabitants. Weather patterns change and fluctuate without warning, so a beautiful clear day can turn to a raging snowstorm in minutes.

Along the southern and eastern reaches of the Deep Wilds stretches vast woodlands. The canopy of leaves overhead grows so densely that it seems all light must surely be blotted out. In the Deep Forest, where the vegetation grows thick and the wildlife is abundant, the greatest of all trees flourishes. Here, at the heart of the great wood in a glen called Summeroak, almighty Silvanus makes his home.

West, across the Singing Water and below the great escarpment, lies the Land of the Hunt, demesne of the Render. The River of Blood winds for uncounted miles across the untamed savannah to the shore of the Blood Sea.

From her court hundreds of leagues beneath the crimson waters of the Blood Sea, the Queen of the Depths commands the undersea denizens of her ocean realm. Above the rolling seas, gale-force winds and torrential rain threaten to drown air-breathers foolish enough to cross the burgundy expanse.

As a traveler moves north through the Deep Wilds, the land grows colder and colder until all terrain dissolves into an ever-present covering of ice and snow. Known to many as the Frostfell, and named Tír fo Leth by the fey, the Land Under Eternal Ice is bitterly cold and mirrors perfectly the harsh nature of the realm's unfeeling monarch.

The Land Under Eternal Ice

From the outside it might seem that the Land Under Eternal Ice is similar to any polar region of the mortal world. Some observe that it appears to mirror the terrain and species found in Pelvuria or Sossal—the wintry lands of Auril's Teeth in northern Faerûn. Though similarities exist superficially, travelers to Tír fo Leth quickly discover a harsh truth: No colder place exists among the astral dominions. Even the sky of the Frostfell is strange and beautiful since it appears to be caught forever in the throes of a spectacular sunset, swathing the land in perpetual twilight.

Though similarities exist superficially, travelers to Tír fo Leth quickly discover a harsh truth: No colder place exists among the astral dominions.

Auril's dusky realm is an enigma floating in the Astral Sea. It's a land where raw, intangible belief meets raw, immutable reality. Read on for a brief examination of the more prominent landmarks in the Land Under Eternal Ice.

Lornnure, the Icewail Shallows

Massive bergs of scarlet ice wander silently throughout the chill northeastern waters of the Blood Sea, which the Queen of the Depths ceded to Auril's control. Aside from dealing with predatory sea life, surface travelers also must be wary of blood snow blizzards. These poisonous winter storms form up frequently in the region.

Sionnan Lagoon: Divers surviving the frigid arctic temperatures and dangerous aquatic predators of Sionnan Lagoon report seeing the ruins of a crystalline city in its darkest depths. The sunken walls and towers are covered with glyphs etched in ruathlek—a lost script not seen in the Realms since before the Time of Troubles.

Lairgmore, the Hallowfrost Plains

Sandwiched between the Beastlord's Forest of Gnashing Teeth and Nightfall Glacier, Lairgmore is an austere steppe-tundra of frozen lakes and sparse vegetation. Here snow falls in abundance, blanketing the ground most of the year. The windswept plains are populated by great mammoths, alpine megaloceros, and saber-toothed smilodon.

Shiverfang Gulch: An intricate pattern of serpentine trails among the snow drifts marks this sharp depression at the center of the Hallowfrost Plains as the favored hunting territory of the frost worms. A dim blue light shines from the gulch, though the subtle light is visible only at night.

Lawgoch's Labyrinth: Rumors state that the entrance to this chaotic subterranean maze is buried somewhere beneath Shiverfang Gulch. Legends say that a titan or primordial of incredible size and ferocity was chained here by Auril in a past age.

Stromfar, the Frosthorn Peaks

Rising up sharply from the Hallowfrost Plains stands the imposing Frosthorn Peaks. After navigating the

treacherous Pass of Magog, travelers find themselves on the broken highland plain known as Semion-Tor, or the Icespire Crags.

Pass of Magog: The towering cliffs along this precarious trail through the Stromfar are riddled with countless crags, rookeries, and aeries where various avian and winged petitioners nest—including the enigmatic Aearee-Quor.

Icespire Crags: Here the permafrost tundra juts up from the bedrock at severe angles, which makes navigation arduous at best. Treacherous deep ice crevasses lie concealed underfoot between icy tors. The crags are the dominion of Gale Monarch Leucetios.

Shiverpine Forest

The lush, verdant, snow-capped woodlands of the Shiverpine Forest exhibit the essence of a winter wonderland. Here Auril's fury is less severe, which permits all manner of woodland creatures to inhabit this primeval pine forest.

Creirwy Glade: Fey of the Shiverpine Forest revere Auril as the Queen of Air and Darkness, a malevolent faerie goddess banished from the Feywild at the dawn of time after a failed coup against the Seelie Court. A dark moonwell centered in Creirwy Glade is rumored to be a ley crossroad to the Feywild. The gate is guarded fiercely by spriggans in service to the Goblin King. Most outsiders that stumble upon Creirwy Glade are never seen again.

Glas Nure, the Icewall Mountains

The northern highlands of the Shiverpine Forest eventually give way to the majestic Icewall Mountains, which has peaks climbing above 25,000 feet. Well above the timberline, this bleak range marks the frontier between the more temperate regions of the south and Nightfall Glacier beyond.

Silverlight Aerie: Nestled within a sheltered dale among the southeastern peaks of the Glas Nure exists a community of al karak elam, known to mortals as the avariel or winged elves. The mist-laden nest-town was settled amid a soaring canopy of ethereal yew trees, and it stretches nearly half a mile vertically while remaining an equal distance above the ground at its lowest point. The avariel here profess a deep devotion to Auril, having adopted the faith of the Frostmaiden following her victory over Aerdrie Faenya. Highly reclusive beings, the al karak elam seldom initiate contact with others.

Path of Votigern: In the darkest depths beneath the mountains, hidden from the twilight above, winds a shadowy path—an ancient road. The road's egress lies along the northern side of the range, where it opens at the foot of Galebreaker Trench. Some speculate that a hidden chamber nestled deep within the Icewall Mountains along the Path of Votigern shelters a gate to Fimbulwinter in the Elemental Chaos, which is the domain of the titan lord Thrym.

Nitharay, the Nightfall Glacier

Commonly perceived as an uninhabitable ice field, the Nightfall Glacier is indeed an inhospitable wasteland of ice and snow. In addition to the bone-chilling temperatures, travelers on the glacier must also be vigilant against Nitharay's many hazards. Numerous cracks, fissures, and chasms abound here, because the glacier constantly shifts, buckles, and reforms. In addition, numerous supernatural storms and hazards spring up in the area from time to time, posing even greater threats to the unwary.

Galebreaker Trench: This vast crevasse, nearly 100 miles at its widest point, cuts deep into the glacier from north to south, and it ends at the Icewall Mountains. Howling winds racing down the trench strum and pluck at myriad hanging icicles to produce hypnotic music that some have compared to a symphony of tuneless harps.

Fog of Unyielding Ice: Moving northwest along the glacial shelf brings explorers to an uneven plain of churning, super-cold vapors. These mists are breathable, but they can freeze a traveler's lungs solid if he or she doesn't have some manner of protection from the cold. Vortices to the Boundless Blue in the Elemental Chaos are common in the skies above the Fog of Unyielding Ice.

Deargpool, the Everfrost Bay

In contrast to the violent waters of the Blood Sea, the clear blue waters of Everfrost Bay are calm and almost inviting. Vast walls of sheer ice border much of the western coastline. Travelers must be wary of ravenous winter wolves stalking the periphery of the Shiverpine Forest.

Sepulcher of the Sleeping One: Here in his icy tomb beneath Deargpool, the corpse of Sea King Ulutiu rests for all eternity. A cadre of frost titans guards the sepulcher against tomb robbers and vandals.

Winter Hall

Like a severe winter storm, Auril's Winter Hall moves slowly across the Deep Wilds, bringing strong winds and heavy blowing snow wherever it passes.

Built of wind and ice, the structure seems as if it were carved from a massive iceberg, flipped on its end, and thrust hundreds of leagues into the sky. The palace is nearly 5,000 feet in diameter at its base and an equal number of feet high at its summit, with a labyrinthine maze of corridors, halls, and passages inside it. With nearly twenty thousand damned spirits and immortal servitors dwelling within it at any given time, Winter Hall is easily the size of a small city.

Immense crystalline beams protrude from the shell of the Hall in several locations. Massive in size, these crystal spires give the otherwise drab fortress

some color, which ranges from deep royal blue to sea green. Much of the colossal ice mote is shrouded in a perpetual miasma of thick fog and freezing rain. If Auril is particularly angry, fierce cerulean thunderclouds form over the Hall, bringing merciless blizzard conditions upon the lands below.

Winter Hall as a physical structure is an amalgamation of varied styles that has undergone continual expansion over the millennia. The most recent addition was the assimilation of the Winged Mother's floating palace in the Year of the Wrathful Eye (1391 DR).

The Nest

A yawning portico open to the sky below marks the underbelly of Auril's floating palace. Within this cavity, and shielded by a wall of wind, are sprawling docks and shipyards, which might appear as both impressive and bizarre to first-time visitors. Among the spiderwork wharfs are moored all manner of derelict airships including flying chariots and astral-jammers. Loyal stormwardens patrolling the skies over Tír fo Leth have commandeered these vessels. Why the Frostmaiden keeps these captured vessels instead of destroying them is unknown.

The Promenade

Araamroth, also known as the Promenade, is an immense cavity a mile across that sits at the core of Auril's Winter Hall. This space is filled with a chaotic latticework of crystalline pathways that dance and flicker with prismatic radiance. Support columns permit access from one level to the next. Countless petitioners utilize these walkways to go about their daily tasks. Pathways are kept lit by lamps made from will-o-wisps (or other luminous creatures such as tiny glowing sprites) frozen in globes of ice. Many of Auril's petitioners, gifted with wings or another method of flight, fly from one platform to the next.

The Dome

Capping the Promenade is a majestic, clear dome of the purest elemental ice. At will, Auril can banish the howling winds and thunderstorms enveloping the palace, which then exposes to viewers within the dome a breathtaking view of the polar lights dancing across the twilight sky.

The Abattoir

At the foot of Araamroth stands the Abattoir, a twin oscillating structure crafted of chaotic elemental forces. In a time not too distant, high priests and fell warlocks would perform bloody sacrifices and vile rituals within this temple with the hopes of blanketing all Toril in darkness and ice. Today the abattoir stands unused, a fading yet grim reminder of the corrupting influence of the Black Diamond.

Lyceum of Frozen Shadow

Secreted away in the bowels of Winter Hall is Auril's grand throne room, Amon Thyryr—the Lyceum of Frozen Shadow. The lyceum is a grand and intimidating place, which is by design. When she manifests in the Hall, Auril broods or holds court from her throne of blue fire. She appears as a haughty winged faerie of terrible, cold beauty, with bone-white skin and angular features; her mane of flowing black hair is adorned with an ornate crown of platinum and diamonds.

Legend and Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful History or Religion check.

History

DC 15: No mortal realm is beyond Auril's influence. Even the scorching desert of the Skyfire Wastes was frozen over for months in the Year of Holy Thunder (1450 DR), while the Frostmaiden sent her vassals to battle the genies and efreet of Calimshan.

DC 30: Auril's palace is a trophy hall of sorts that displays for all to see her victories over countless enemies over the ages. The Lyceum, for example, was crafted from the beating heart of the primordial Durbaagal, whom she defeated at the dawn of time.

Religion

DC 15: Auril is one of the Three Furies, along with Malar and Umberlee. The Furies owe their allegiance to Silvanus following the events of the Stormstar Requiem—where Talos was revealed as the orc god Gruumsh and banished from Fury's Heart.

DC 20: Since the coming of the Spellplague, Auril has gained significant power by siphoning the faiths of Ulutiu, Aerdie Faenya, and Gruumsh into her own. In addition to her classic portfolio of cold and winter, the Frostmaiden now claims dominion over wind and storms—bringing her into direct conflict with the ancient primordial power Akadi.

DC 25: Chosen invested with a portion of the Frostmaiden's divinity, Auril's exarchs include The Ice Queen, Iyraclea and Artus Cimber. Iyraclea is charged with ferreting out Akadi's spies within Auril's realm, while Artus spends most of his time in human guise among the mortals of Toril.

Winter Hag

Unimaginably depraved and conniving, the winter hags are the handmaidens of Auril, goddess of wind and ice. These chaotic creatures are feared throughout the Realms for their abundant array of deadly powers, but occassionally sought out for their wise council and skilled prognostication.

Winter Hag Tactics

A winter hag typically opens combat with rimefire blast to evaluate an opponents' vulnerability to cold. Enemies who appear resistant to cold are subjected to

winter curse. Winter hags prefer to ambush foes with their great maneuverability. They like to lure opponents into inescapable deadfalls and snowdrifts or trap them with icy bonds. A winter hag retreats from a dangerous opponent with *blizzard step* rather than fight to the death.

Auril

Frostmaiden, Storm-bringer, Icedawn, Lady Frostkiss

Chaotic Evil Goddess

Auril (awe-ril) is a vain and fickle creature whose cold heart remains untouched by any hint of true love, noble feeling, or honor. She is a somewhat aloof deity, and she embodies freedom and impulse. She toys with those who offend her by trapping them in snow storms and then driving them insane by tantalizing them with visions of warmth and the comforts of home before she freezes them to death. Her eternal beauty is cold and deadly—the flower of womanhood preserved forever in a slab of arctic ice, but with sensibilities to match the ice.

Winter Hag Lore

A character knows the following information about winter hags with a successful Religion check.

DC 20: The white hag is a hideous and wretched old crone with a taste for human flesh. Winter hags are the most likely of Auril's handmaidens to be encountered on Faerûn—notably in the land of Rashemen. As the month of Tarsakh approaches, seasoned hathran witches of that realm are dispatched to battle a winter hag. If they fail, spring is delayed and bitter winter conditions persist for several weeks longer.

Winter Hag **Level 19 Lurker**
Medium fey humanoid XP 2,400

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
Whiteout aura 4; severe snow and wind obscure sight and movement; all creatures that start their turns inside the hag's aura gain total concealment and are slowed. The hag is unaffected by whiteout conditions and can see enemies clearly.
HP 139; **Bloodied** 69
AC 33; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30
Immune cold
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)

⊕ **Graystaff** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
+24 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 cold damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Winter Curse (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +24 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 cold damage and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends), and the target's resistance to cold is negated until the end of the encounter.

Rimefire Blast (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Close blast 5; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 7 cold damage.

Icy Bonds (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ✦ **Cold, Zone**
Area burst 3 within 15; the area becomes a zone filled with chains of permafrost that remain until the end of the hag's next turn. Any creature that enters or begins its turn in the area or adjacent to it is restrained and takes ongoing 10 cold damage (save ends both). As a move action, the hag can slide a target shackled in icy bonds 2 squares.

Blizzard Step (minor; recharge ⚄ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**
The winter hag teleports 10 squares, reappearing in a hail of wind and frost; it gains invisibility until the end of its next turn.

Change Shape (minor; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
A winter hag can alter its physical form to appear as an old crone of any Medium or Large humanoid race (see *Change Shape, MM page 280*).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +11
Str 17 (+12) **Dex** 25 (+16) **Wis** 22 (+15)
Con 19 (+13) **Int** 20 (+14) **Cha** 18 (+13)

Encounter Groups

Winter hags are most often encountered in the remote reaches of Rasheman or the Land Under Eternal Ice in the Deep Wilds. It's not uncommon for winter hags to travel with mounted ice archon and avariel escorts.

Winter's Fury (Level 18, XP 11,200)
✦ 1 winter hag (level 19 lurker)
✦ 1 ice archon frostshaper (level 20 controller [leader])
✦ 1 rimefire griffon (level 20 skirmisher)
✦ 1 ghaele of winter (level 21 artillery)

About the Author

A software engineering manager by day and Forgotten Realms® loremaster by night, **Brian R. James** authored the *Grand History of the Realms* and more recently *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*. He also contributed to the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* and continues to serve up new Realmslore through *D&D Insider* and *Candlekeep Compendium*. Brian would like to thank Gray Richardson for his invaluable assistance during the writing of this article.

Lost Village of Janus Gull

BY GLENN MCDONALD

illustration by Ryan Barger

In the waning days of the Purge—an attempt by the Church of the Silver Flame to eradicate all lycanthropes from the face of Eberron—Aundairian paladin Cormac Mael was dispatched to the Eldeen Reaches to lead a retinue of hunters. In the year 880 YK, just before being recalled to Aundair, Cormac and his band took shelter in the fishing village of Janus Gull on the northern shores of Lake Galifar.

To his surprise, the zealously ascetic paladin met and instantly fell in love with a local villager, Esme, the teenaged daughter of the town's sole smith. Cormac found that, despite his allegiance to the Church, he was dangerously fixated on her. Making matters worse, Esme spurned Cormac's advances, as she counted many shifters among her friends and found the Church's genocidal campaign against lycanthropes to be abhorrent. When Cormac attempted to force himself on her, the town rallied to her defense—driving the paladin from town and into the surrounding forest.

Cormac, mad with obsession and grief, fell from grace, embracing evil and vowing that if he could not have Esme, no one would. He sought the counsel of a local "water witch," the demented cleric Sidheag (SHEE-ak) Ros. Sidheag, a fanatic who had long harbored a hatred for Janus Gull, believed that the fishing village was defiling the natural order of "her" lake. The fallen paladin, further seduced down the path of darkness by the mad water witch, resolved to destroy the entire village of Janus Gull. Under a harvest moon, on a windswept bluff overlooking the village, Cormac and Sidheag performed a blasphemous ritual.

By morning, the entire village had been swept away by fire and flood, lightning and rain. An elemental storm of unprecedented proportions blew in from the lake, laying waste to the village in a single night. Where Janus Gull once stood, nothing remained. No ruins, no survivors. It was as if the village had been pulled entire into the watery depths of the lake.

Cormac and Sidheag's wicked amalgamation of divine magic created a reality storm of such power that Janus Gull was ripped from the world. As the storm reached its peak just before dawn, Janus Gull splintered off as a demiplane.

Janus Gull now exists in a temporal and spatial loop, its inhabitants reliving the same night over and over again. During the time the demiplane has existed, other beings have stumbled in from various other planes, times and worlds. Every year on 23 Sypheros on the anniversary of the great storm, the village manifests again in its proper place in the world on the shore of Lake Galifar for a single night.

The demiplane of Janus Gull, now a semisentient entity, has only one hope for final peace and rest. Heroes must enter the village of their own volition, during its brief coterminous phase with Eberron proper. There they must survive the storm and confront the fallen paladin and the water witch. If the ritual can be disrupted before dawn, Janus Gull will collapse in upon itself, releasing its inhabitants.

Getting the PCs Involved

PCs in the vicinity of Janus Gull's former location—the eastern, agrarian region of the Eldeen Reaches—may stumble onto the story of Janus Gull any number of ways. Many older residents of the nearby town of Cree tell the tale of a ghost village that appears once a year on the rocky shores of the lake. Many local folk with experience with forestcraft (rangers, woodcutters, herbalists) or fisherfolk can direct PCs to the general location of the village.

The site of the former village is a shallow, rocky lagoon on the shore of Lake Galifar. Regardless of the local weather, some form of precipitation falls in this area beginning every sundown. At sundown of 23 Sypheros, the village of Janus Gull reappears, replacing the lagoon, until sunrise the next day.

PCs can only enter Janus Gull on the night of 23 Sypheros. Whether they scout out the location and wait, or simply happen to be in the right place at the wrong time, the PCs encounter the ghost of Esme. Trapped in the tragedy of Janus Gull for more than a century, Esme wanders the nearby roads of the Reaches once every year on 23 Sypheros. She hopes to lure heroes back to the village. Esme knows that the village can only be saved if the heroes confront and defeat Cormac and Sidheag.

DMs can choose to reveal the backstory upfront or let it unfold as the PCs explore the village. For instance, patrons of the PCs or NPCs that the PCs often lean on information for can disclose much of the story, suggesting that the PCs must enter the village and confront Cormac and Sidheag to and lift the curse. Alternatively, DMs may have the PCs work out the situation on their own after crossing the boundaries of the demiplane and getting trapped in Janus Gull. Within Janus Gull, Syn-Tallow, Brother Iannis, Taffy, Keener, and the ghost of Esme can all fill in some or all of the tale, and communicate the goal of the adventure.

Residents of Janus Gull

Villagers: Most residents of Janus Gull are villagers that survived the night of the great storm and exist as they were previous to the splintering off of the village into a demiplane. However, due to the temporal loop of Janus Gull, they neither age nor have any awareness that they are living the same night over and over. When forced to interact with others, or prevented from performing their repeated actions, they turn hostile and aggressive or simply become catatonic. They dimly perceive the PCs as being "outside" of their reality. In fact, the former villagers are gradually surrendering their individual identities to the demiplane itself (see Esme/Janus Gull, below.) While villagers can be killed, they can never permanently die. They resume their place in the order of things, reappearing upon a new iteration of Janus Gull's endlessly looping night.

Some exceptional villagers (and ghosts—see below) have intuited the truth and become aware of their situation. These individuals have varying degrees of lucidity and free will. Some know the nature of the temporal loop but are unable to break out of their repeated actions. Some have achieved limited free will to roam the village looking for an escape. The DM can choose to populate Janus Gull however he or she sees fit to create opponents or allies appropriate to the level of the party.

Ghosts: The ghosts that haunt Janus Gull are those unfortunate souls who were killed during the storm, but whose souls did not escape before the demiplane was created. Ghosts encountered in the village function as outlined in *Monster Manual.* Phantom warriors (*MM* 116) linger in the areas where they died and may attack the PCs in the belief that they are outsiders who were responsible for bringing the disaster to the village. Trap haunts (*MM* 116) attempt to possess PCs in order to escape their fate. Some ghosts in Janus Gull are helpful. They hope that by

aiding the PCs that the village can be liberated and their souls be freed to move on.

Visitors: Visitors to Janus Gull are entities and creatures that have wandered into the lost village as it briefly touches and becomes coterminous with other planes and worlds. Some visitors are described in the Encounters section below, and the DM should feel free to populate Janus Gull with other planar hitchhikers. Denizens of any plane in the Eberron cosmology could potentially be found in Janus Gull.

Esme/Janus Gull: In the years that the lost village has been wandering as a demiplane, the demiplane has achieved a primitive sentience built from the collective consciousness of its inhabitants. When the entity that is Janus Gull wishes to communicate with visitors, it speaks through the ghost of Esme, the young maiden whose story is at the heart of the Janus Gull tragedy. (In fact, all natives of Janus Gull—living and dead—are gradually surrendering their individual identities to the collective personality of the demiplane.)

When manifesting as Esme, the demiplane is lost in despair and nearly incoherent, desperate to know why the storm is endlessly destroying the village. ("Why does it keep raining? Why won't it stop?") In her fear, she is also prone to tantrums and may attack the PCs ("You did this! You killed my family!") While it is hostile to the PCs, the Esme personality is a tormenting ghost (*MM* 117).

PCs will likely encounter Esme several times in the village. While the Esme personality is unstable, the collective consciousness of Janus Gull knows the circumstances of the village's curse. In her moments of lucidity, Esme provides the PCs with hints that they must confront the paladin and the water witch to escape the doomed demiplane. Having only recently come into self-awareness, the demiplane is inexperienced in communicating with other beings, and Janus Gull may also choose to communicate with the PCs by other means than Esme.

Environmental Effects

The demiplane of Janus Gull is a replica of the actual village just before it splintered from the natural world. It exists as both a temporal and spatial loop. The same 12 hours, from dusk to dawn of the night of the storm, are replayed endlessly. If the PCs survive a full night within the demiplane without confronting Cormac and Sidheag and resolving the adventure, reality fades to a bright white for several seconds at daybreak and then instantly resets itself to dusk. The village is reformed as it was before the storm. When this reset occurs, the PCs are affected as if they had just taken an extended rest, regaining all action points, healing surges, hit points, and powers.

Spatially, the demiplane is self-contained and recursive—it has wrapped edges, so that beings walking through the fog on the east end of the village find themselves entering the village again from the west.

It is constantly raining in Janus Gull, and as the night progresses, the storm increasingly worsens. DMs should use their discretion as to the effects of weather-related magic and powers. Any magic—especially any ritual—that affects weather conditions in general, regardless of type or level, is prevented from working in Janus Gull. It is an unalterable fact of existence on the demiplane that the storm rages continuously and exactly as it did on the night the village was lost. (However, it is possible that a gust of wind might be created or a specific bolt of lightning invoked.) In Janus Gull, reality always reforms to replicate the events of the night of 23 Sypheros.

The storm conditions of Janus Gull create special challenges. DMs can use the guidelines for weather-related encounters in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (page 158) to create various terrain obstacles and hazards or unique skill challenges. The PCs should be contending with extremely adverse environmental conditions while in Janus Gull, including flash floods, mudslides, flying debris, and lightning strikes.

As the eternally repeating night progresses, more of the village is washed away in floods or consumed by fire from magical lightning strikes. In hour before daybreak, there is almost no shelter to be found.

Encounters

Following are potential encounters for the PCs. Specifics are deliberately open-ended. DMs should adjust levels and encounters to make them appropriate to the level of the party.

Syn-Tallow and Brother Iannis

Syn-Tallow (unaligned tiefling rogue) and Brother Iannis (unaligned human cleric) are two planar refugees that have taken shelter in the floating demiplane. They live together in the wine cellars beneath the former town hall. A true odd couple, theirs is a partnership of convenience. Syn-Tallow is a fugitive, fleeing an authority he chooses not to name. Whatever the circumstance, he is frightened enough to have holed up in Janus Gull for more than a decade, eluding enemies that otherwise would be chasing him across the planes. Charismatic and charming, Syn-Tallow is elusive and vague to an extreme about his past.

Even less is known about the background of Brother Iannis, an ascetic cleric who has spent years silently meditating beneath the surface of the village. Iannis deliberately sought out the demiplane, and he is attempting to forge a spiritual bond with the emerging sentience of Janus Gull. Iannis does not speak, but instead communicates with Syn-Tallow in a complex system of chants and body language. Iannis uses his psychic bond with the demiplane to keep Syn-Tallow concealed from planar pursuers while the tiefling physically guards their wine cellar abode from interlopers. Iannis is fully aware of the nature of the curse on Janus Gull, and he has no wish to see the plane liberated. It's possible that he might side with Cormac and Sidheag if the PCs attempt to break the curse.

Githyanki Raiders

This small githyanki raiding party literally stumbled into Janus Gull during a foray on the Astral Plane. Unable as of yet to figure a way out of the village's planar boundaries, the githyanki have endured Janus Gull's perpetual storm for many years. They are extremely frustrated, hostile, and wet. They have excavated a system of trenches, caves, and tunnels beneath the village square.

Keener, Warforged Banshee

Keener, a ranger, was Janus Gull's sole warforged resident at the time of the catastrophe. Keener was killed by a savage lightning strike at the height of the storm. Now he wanders the demiplane as a wailing ghost (*MM* 117) haunting the village with his plaintive, eerie, and slightly mechanical wail. Keener is not necessarily hostile to the PCs, but attacks if provoked.

Feral Shifters

A group of feral shifters roams the fens and marshes on the outskirts of Janus Gull. The shifters were originally a diplomatic contingent from the Eldeen interior. They were caught in the destruction of 23 Sypheros and have since descended into madness and savagery, attacking anything on sight.

Tally's Bunker

Previous to the night of 23 Sypheros, Taffy Yoram was a feebleminded old half-elf who subsisted on the villagers' charity and tolerance. Perhaps because of his mental state, Taffy has retained a measure of free will relative to the fate of Janus Gull's other permanent residents. Taffy keeps a well-maintained bunker within an abandoned stone grain silo: one of the few structures to withstand the nightly storm. Taffy may offer the PCs shelter and information about the rest of the village, though his counsel is cryptic and hard to decipher.

Angels and Devils

On the same evening that the PCs enter Janus Gull, two groups of bounty hunters—one composed of angels, and other of devils—also make their way to the demiplane via the shores of Lake Galifar. These teams have been tasked with hunting down the tiefling rogue Syn-Tallow, whose luck has finally run out. DMs should feel free to use angel and devils of any appropriate level or swap in any two groups instead of angels and devils whose interests are typically opposed. Depending on whose story they believe, the PCs could find themselves allied with either side in this conflict—or caught in the middle of it—and the mystery of Syn-Tallow's fugitive status could spark yet another adventure.

The Final Confrontation

The curse of Janus Gull is such that the demiplane is forced to wander the universe unless heroes can defeat the two prime architects of its fate. Sidheag, once a cleric but now a bog hag, and the fallen paladin Cormac can be found on the bluffs overlooking the village of Janus Gull, where they endlessly conduct their vile ritual during the night of 23 Sypheros.

Unlike the other residents of Janus Gull, these two villains can be permanently defeated in combat. In fact, their defeat is the key to resolving the fate of the lost village and breaking the time loop that the village is entangled in. The PCs must disrupt the ritual before its completion to save the lost village and earn their own escape from the wandering demiplane.

When encountered, Sidheag and Cormac are tending to their ritual on the bluffs. Scattered around the clearing are defiled Silver Flame symbols and strange, animalist icons. The showdown with the villains should coincide with the peak of the storm's fury.

Sidheag the bog hag (*Monster Manual* 150) is a wild and ferocious presence who believes she is the very wrath of nature. She is has several water creatures and elementals under her command. Sidheag is quite mad and utterly without compassion for the civilized races. She is robed in a hideous patchwork of pelts, scales, shells, skins, and seaweed.

Cormac (evil human paladin) is both a tragic and frightening figure. Lost in despair and rage, he is maniacally focused on the destruction of Janus Gull. He attacks with savage abandon any who would stand in the way of his mad quest. He still wears the garments and armor, now filthy and soiled, of his former paladin order.

Resolving the Adventure

When the PCs defeat Cormac and Sidheag, the curse is broken and the village of Janus Gull returns to the world in its previous place. Ghosts trapped within the demiplane are released to continue on the afterworld where their destinies await. The living residents of Janus Gull—returned to the natural timestream—begin aging normally.

The sentient aspect of Janus Gull, after depositing its various residents back into Eberron, may choose to continue its wanderings throughout the universe. The demiplane feels a certain gratitude to the PCs. The PCs find they have a powerful ally for future adventures—a sentient planar village that, when contacted, can offer refuge and transport between planes or other worlds.

About the Author

Glenn McDonald is a freelance writer and game designer. He has been writing Eberron® content for the D&D® website and print for some time now, as well as writing as a freelancer for numerous other professional publications of all sorts.

The Evoluton of Magic Items

Orcus to Player's Handbook to Adventurer's Vault

By Andy Collins and Mike Mearls

Andy Collins: As with all elements of the new edition, magic items went through many iterations of design and development before seeing the light of day in the *Player's Handbook*. Even though we all agreed on the basic goal—magic items should make up a less prominent segment of a character's array of powers and options than in 3rd Edition—that proved to be the easy part.

Here's an excerpt from a magic item system design draft dated September 30, 2005—the earliest substantial treatment of magic items for 4th Edition (back when it was still simply known by its code-name, "Orcus").

Magic items are permanent items that occupy a place on a character's body and fulfill two distinct roles. First, every item grants a relatively small, usually static bonus to certain statistics—attack rolls, defenses, speed, armor class, and the like. Second, if a character attunes a specific magic item to himself, it grants him the use of a power.

You can't have more than one item on the same body slot, even if you're not attuned. You can't wear magic bracers and a magic shield, for example.

The minimum level required to equip your character with a single magic item is 5th. For every 5 levels gained above 5th, you can equip your character with one more magic item.

Bonus: Depending on the body slot it occupies, a magic item grants a small, static bonus to a character's statistics.

Arms: +1 Reflex OR +1 damage/die with melee attacks. (Gauntlets, bracers, shield)

Head: +1 Will OR +1 damage/die with ranged attacks. (Helmet, circlet, goggles, mask)

Heart: +1 Fortitude OR +1 DR. (amulet, armor, vest, cloak, robe)

Legs: +5 ft. land speed OR +1 hp/level. (boots, belt)

Magic weapons (swords, axes, wands) don't occupy a body slot, though they must be held to be used. A magic weapon grants a +1 bonus on attack rolls made using it.

Rings are a special case—every ring's powers are unique and are only gained by attunement (see below).

Attunement: In addition to the basic bonus granted by all magic items (other than rings), beginning at 10th level you can attune yourself to a magic item to unlock one of its special powers. In order to attune yourself to the power of a magic item, your level must be at least as great as that of the power (minimum 10th).

A ritual of attunement takes 1 hour of uninterrupted meditation. The first time you undergo a ritual of attunement for a specific magic item power, it also costs in special materials (unguents, oils, incense, and the like). After that, you don't need any special materials unless the item has been a) out of your presence for more than 30 days, or b) attuned to another character since it was last attuned to you.

You may only be attuned to a single magic item power at any given time. When you perform another attunement ritual, you lose your attunement to all previously attuned powers. At 15th level, you may be attuned to up to two powers (either within a single item or two different items), and at 25th level to up to three powers (among as many as three different items). A single ritual can attune you to as many items as are allowed.

This draft took a very hard-line, hard-coded approach to doling out magic item effects to characters, specifically limiting how many magic items you could effectively wear and/or use based on your level. It also drastically reduced the number of body slots available in the game (to a mere four, not counting weapons and rings).

We hadn't yet ironed out the bonus system used for weapons and armor (I notice, for instance, that AC bonuses are nowhere to be found in this excerpt, but it must have made sense at the time). However, note the strong desire to codify which slots contained particular bonuses—all items with an enhancement bonus to Fortitude defense would appear in the Heart slot—which remained essentially true throughout design and development.

This draft bears a lot of my personal design sensibilities, including a desire for a symmetrical approach to passing out different statistical bonuses. In reviewing this old draft just now, there was no question in my mind that a) these were (mostly) my words staring up at me, and b) I was following a somewhat

misguided path. It's a bit weird to read things that you've written and don't agree with any more.

Mike Mearls: While this specific implementation of the rules circa 2005 didn't survive into the final product, their basic goal persisted throughout the design process: Keep magic items simple, make them a small proportion of a character's power, and make their expected progression utterly transparent. The details of the system changed dramatically, but the goals never shifted. In most instances, the changes we made took place because the rules didn't properly serve those foundational, guiding principles.

AC: Sometime during 2006, the array of body slots morphed to match what would eventually appear in the *Player's Handbook*, though we still retained the forced symmetry that required each slot to have its own default statistical bonus. Most of our advances during that year, however, were in understanding how classes and powers work, and magic items didn't see a lot of improvement.

MM: This is a common refrain of our work in 2006: Make the classes work, and then solve everything else. In designing 4th Edition, we established a clear hierarchy of importance. Class and race are key building blocks to a character, with skills, feats, and magic items serving to refine and tweak a character, rather than define it. We realized that, until the classes were fully functional and their capabilities well defined, we couldn't truly understand where magic items sat in the system.

AC: By March of 2007, we'd settled on something very much like the current scaling bonus system (though +1 items appeared all the way through 10th level, and the bonus still topped out at +5 for level 26 to 30). Passive properties were common, and activated powers were present but rare (and cost an action point to activate).

This draft also established the precedent of magic rings as appearing first in the paragon tier, and posited that they should have dramatic and unusual powers (when compared to other items).

MM: Rings were an interesting case. Initially, we wanted to make them higher level for two reasons. One, pushing rings back reduced the number of item slots a character had to worry about at high levels. Two, we wanted to reserve one slot for powerful, interesting, and story-rich items. We thought there would be something interesting about a class of items that, when found, immediately flagged themselves as important. In theory, a good idea. In practice, the playtesters found the divide artificial. After all, a rookie burglar found and used the most notable ring in fantasy literature. In the end, we decided to remove the limitations on rings. Instead, we use a more organic guideline that keeps rings as higher level items. A low level character who happens to find a ring can still use it, but using our standard treasure guidelines means that the PCs start to find rings at around 10th level.

AC: In the next significant iteration later that year, we'd removed the symmetrical list of statistical bonuses. Playtest feedback made it clear that forcing characters to use four different item slots to build up their defenses was too onerous (and not fun), so we combined the Fort, Ref, and Will bonuses into one slot (neck). We also recognized that mandatory bonuses on damage and speed weren't necessary—they could be added to items as appropriate, rather than for every item in a slot.

MM: The removal of the mandatory damage bonus took place as part of what I think of as the Great Deflation, a fundamental shift in our system math that dropped damage and hit points by a significant percentage.

We had one more, important change to make in magic items. Take a look at the symbol of hope on page 237 of the *Player's Handbook*. It's a 3rd-level item that scales all the way up to 28th level. Yet, its daily power never changes. It provides a +5 bonus to a save, a benefit that doesn't need to scale since it is equally useful at all levels. The problem we ran into was that, at higher levels, characters could spend a small portion of their wealth on half a dozen to a dozen items like the symbol of hope, items with activated benefits that didn't scale. A 28th-level cleric might carry his +6 *symbol of radiance* to blast enemies, but keep a satchel with a dozen items like +1 *symbols of hope* to help the party.

Since we wanted magic items to remain clearly subordinate to powers granted by classes, we needed to alter the system. At high levels, magic items became an easy, cheap way to buy dozens of free powers. The result of this discussion lies on page 226 of the *Player's Handbook*. We decided to place a cap on the number of daily items you can use per day, with additional uses accrued at each milestone, to ensure that magic items remained a useful but secondary set of tools. Tying into this change, we shifted items toward daily rather than encounter powers.

As I mentioned above, while the mechanics that exists in the game bear only a passing resemblance to the original rules proposal from over three years ago, the spirit and design intent remained intact throughout the process. We wanted magic items to become secondary to a character's class and race. I think we accomplished that.

About the Authors

Andy Collins co-designed the 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons game, and works for Wizards of the Coast, Inc., as the Manager of Rules Design & Development for RPG R&D. His credits stretch back a decade and include *Magic Item Compendium*, *Draconomicon*, *Unearthed Arcana*, and the *Epic Level Handbook*.

Mike Mearls is the Lead Developer for the Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game. His recent credits include the H-series of 4th Edition adventures and *Player's Handbook II (v.3.5)*.

Master Mind

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE

This whole Dungeon Mastering thing has gone to my head. I'm on a quest to get everyone I know to play D&D. I'm like a jazzed up, hyper-competitive Mary Kay saleswoman bound and determined to sell enough lip gloss and firming eye cream to get behind the wheel of my very own pink Cadillac. I threaten to run games for everyone–my dental hygienist who politely asked how work was. My new neighbor who responded with "Wizards of the what?" when I told her where I worked. Even the poor woman and her husband who came by to look at the dining room chairs I was selling on Craig's List.

"My husband has sciatica," she told me. "The chairs have to be really comfortable."

"These chairs are so comfortable we could play D&D for hours," I told her sounding eerily close to Ron Popeil pushing his food dehydrator. "Go on. Sit down! You be the fighter and you be the cleric!" I even went so far as to tell James Wyatt that the next version of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* would have my name along side his under the word "by."

"Oh ha, ha," he said. "That's cute! It's like you're running a game right now!"

Fine. Maybe not the next *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

What can I say? I'm giddy with promise. Dungeon Mastering has taught me there's nothing I can't do. Why not climb Mt. Rainier this weekend? Perhaps I'll sign on to be a volunteer firefighter. Maybe, just maybe, I'll friend Stacy Kendrick on Facebook.

Or maybe I'm not that evolved.

Running a successful game has given me new-found sense of security, kind of like being certified in CPR. My D&D playing friends should feel safe in my presence for they will never be far from a game with me around. If we were trapped in a bomb shelter and all we had were our character sheets and a set of dice (because really, do you go anywhere without those two things?) and New DM wasn't with us because he's the one who trapped us in the bomb shelter, fear not friends! I'll run us through a game! Just don't swallow your dice because I don't know CPR.

I woke up the day after DM'ing and D&D was all I thought about. It was odd, this new sensation, like someone unearthed a portal in the section of my brain responsible for the manic enjoyment of role-playing games.

I thought about it on my way to work, magic missiling single car occupants riding in the carpool

lane (I'm lawful good, okay? I cannot tolerate such blatant disregard for the law.) I thought about it in our 9:00 AM team meeting, pretending our boss was a concerned magistrate of a haunted town about to give the party marching orders. I thought about it in kickboxing class, reminiscing about the time a young Astrid actually had to use her fist to take out a bad guy. My right hook was on fire that day.

Clearly my Dungeon Mastering experiment had a surprise side effect. While my skills as a DM may need developing, I had become a much better player. My newly revved up self couldn't wait until the following week for our regular game.

I carried my Tabitha mini and character sheet around the office just in case someone asked me to roll for initiative. It could happen given where I work.

I tried to focus on my real job but visions of fireballs and frozen clouds danced in my head.

Tabitha and I ended up in Sara's cubicle.

"Why is Tabitha sitting on my shoulder?" Sara asked without turning away from her computer screen.

"She's looking for Freya," I said. "Want to go on an adventure?"

"Oh Tabby, Freya's at her other job right now. Shouldn't your mother be there too?"

"Yes," I said, sulking away.

I tried to focus on my real job but visions of fireballs and frozen clouds danced in my head. Tabitha and I went to Scott's cube.

"Want to play D&D?" I asked.

"Is this another experiment?" he asked but didn't wait for my answer. "No. Go away."

"It's not an experiment," I mumbled all the way back to my desk. "I meant a real game with a real DM. Jerk."

On my way back to my desk I ran into Adam.

"You okay?" he asked. "Your pupils are huge! And why are you shaking?"

I leaned in close and whispered, "I'm addicted, man. I need D&D. You got any?"

Adam, who would gladly exchange eating, sleeping, and Christmas to play D&D every day, got a kick out of this. "I wish I did have some," he said. "But we're right in the middle of 2009 planning. Hey, shouldn't you be too?"

"Yesssssssss," I said. Since when did my friends turn into such nerds?

"Go down to R&D," he suggests. "I'm sure you can find someone to roll some dice with."

"R&D?" I scoff. "I'm not playing D&D with R&D! They're...real."

This worried me. If Adam was too busy to play D&D then this whole work thing was for real. I went to New DM's cubicle just to confirm that when Wednesday finally rolled around it was game on.

"I'm going to try," he said, trying to make eye contact over the 3-foot piles of papers on his desk. "But..." he gestured around his cubicle. "Kind of busy." He said this last part real snarky, like I should have known that or something.

I must have gotten visibly upset because New DM launched into the full-throttle panic guys fall into when they think a girl is about to cry.

"It's okay! I'll try. I promise," he said. "I'll work this weekend."

"Thanks, New DM!" I said, knocking over another stack of paper. "You're the best."

But that still didn't help with the six days I'd have to wait.

And then I remembered Fabula—my elf ranger who lives on Facebook. Not quite a real game but about as close to D&D solitaire as you can get. Surely Tiny Adventures would act as a placebo until my Wednesday game.

"Fabula," I said to the computer screen. "Go find an adventure. And hurry back and tell me all about it."

Give me money, she demanded.

"Don't talk to me like that, young lady. I'll delete you."

You wouldn't dare. I'm the only one who will play D&D with you.

"Find an adventure, damn it!" I shout. "And don't forget to take your cryptspawn elixir!"

"Who are you talking to?"

"Umm...my mom," I said.

Scott, the sneaky rogue he is, lurked over my shoulder. "That's so cool how you can communicate with your mom in New York just by staring at Tiny Adventures on your computer screen

"It's a...telepathy thing," I say. "You wouldn't understand."

"Yeah, because I'm not crazy," he says before adding, "If you want to play, go down to R&D."

R&D? And he thinks I'm crazy? What's with everybody? Why not play a pick-up game of hoops with the Lakers? Or bake a pound cake for Paula Deen? Or...play a game with the guys who literally wrote the rules. Yeah. Real smart there, Scotty. Besides, we all I know I don't play in other groups.

"I'll just play Tiny Adventures. Thanks."

"Well keep it down," he says. "You sound like a pageant mom yelling at your little elf princess."

Do they think I'm enjoying this? I'm afflicted! I want my life back! Once perfectly happy playing in my weekly D&D game and looking forward to the next session, now I feel like I will surely wither away and die if I didn't get my hands on some orcs. Wednesday! Where are you?

✦ ✦ ✦

Sweet relief! The day had finally arrived. I showed up on time. Earlier than Adam even. New DM simply raised his eyebrows at me and continued setting up our minis on the playmat where we left them.

When the last party member filters in 8 minutes late, I roll my eyes at New DM as a show of solidarity. We're partners now. I can feel his pain. He begins with a recap of last week.

"Previously on Dungeons & Dragons..."

"Did you read Penny Arcade today?"

"I'm sick of Ben Stiller."

"So spot on..."

"But Tom Cruise was hysterical."

What is going on here? Have they no respect for the Dungeon Master and that he has spent hours, maybe days, probably weeks, preparing for our enjoyment today?

I glared at my party while issuing a snarling "Shh!"

"New DM is talking," I said. "Pay attention."

"Wow."

"So sorry."

"Unless there's been an addendum to the rules," Marty says, "I'm pretty sure you can't get experience points for ass kissing."

Oh, go ahead and mock me. My group doesn't know how lucky they are. Sure they've witnessed my D&D fervor, my punctuality, and now my lunch-lady-like discipline. But what they don't know is all that work I did on my campaign had given me invaluable insights into my fellow character classes.

"You know, when I played the bouncers in my campaign," I began, "I found it really beneficial for them to lock their shields. Sara and Marty might want to try that."

"Unless there's been an addendum to the rules, I'm pretty sure you can't get experience points for ass kissing."

"Excuse me?" Sara said.

"And you," I say to Scott, "need to pay homage to your ancestors and start using fey step more often. I'm sick of pulling your ass out of fires."

"It's an encounter power, Captain Cocky," he shoots back. "I can't use it more often than I already do."

"I'm just saying..."

Bunch of ingrates.

Two hours flies by and it's game over transporting me back to square one. Playing D&D only served to whet my appetite. I was still addicted.

Luckily my affliction coincided with PAX, which blessedly was happening that weekend in Seattle. Pelor was smiling down on me because no doubt I'd be able to get my game on there. Adam, Sara, Marty, and New DM would be there too. Perhaps our schedules would serendipitously land us in a delve together.

By the time the weekend rolled around, I was chomping at the bit to play. I hovered over D&D tables helmed by some of Wizards' finest DMs. I saw strangers taking on the roles of warlords, rangers, and paladins, brandishing swords and looting treasure. It hurt to watch. I can't take it, I thought. I want to play! And then I did the unthinkable. I jumped in on a game—with strangers!

I know! Can you believe it? The strangers were newbies so I felt safe in their presence. So safe that I played a different class. Turns out I'd make a fine ranger.

I ran into New DM shortly after this amazing breakthrough and couldn't wait to tell him what I'd done.

"No kidding?" he said, sounding genuinely impressed. "Want to join my friends and I for a delve?"

Did I? Of course! Hey, I'm a pretty decent warlord too. Critted twice even.

Taking a break from the delves in the booth, I wandered down to the RPGA hall where I ran into Sara.

"Hey little girl," she whispered from behind a pillar. "Still looking for a D&D fix? We're just about to start a delve. You in?"

"Yes!" I shouted before I had a chance to ask who we was.

Before I knew it I was at a table with none other than Peter Schaefer, Andrew Finch, and James Wyatt. What the...? I had been duped!

"I, uh...think I have a dentist appointment," I said. "Sorry, guys."

Sara, the mother of two young boys and therefore an expert at spotting and thwarting a meltdown in the making, handed me a pre-generated character sheet.

"You can be the wizard," she said, patting my hand. "You can even call her Tabitha."

Peter agreed to DM. As he narrated the read-aloud text I half cringed waiting for him to start speaking a different language or shouting commands I wouldn't understand, like "Roll for chickenhankies" or "Give me a muckles check." I'd be faced with spells I had never seen and would cast them at the wrong time.

I can kill an orc at anyone's game!

"Where's my muckles modifier?" I'd ask. And James would flip over the playmat in frustration because I had asked a question.

"Another question?" he would bark. "You're always asking, asking, asking!"

And Andrew would shake his had and laugh and point his finger at me and say something mean, like, "You know, there's a guide for girls like you. Oh wait, didn't you write that?"

"What kind of a wizard doesn't know sustaining a fireball counts as a move action," Peter would ponder. "That's so weird."

"Get out of our delve!" James would cry.

Okay. Calm down. Deep breath. Maybe I'm getting a little overdramatic here. Needless to say, none of that happened. Not even me questioning how to use fireball. Tabitha has used that spell dozens of times. The worst thing that happened was we were having such a good time James was almost late to his *The Art of the Dungeon Master* panel. I wonder why they didn't ask me to be on that?

I left PAX with my shoulder practically needing a sling from all that dice rolling, and my brain bursting from a wealth of new knowledge. The rules don't change just because you're playing with different people. And you don't forget everything you've learned just because you're sitting in a different chair at a different table playing alongside a rogue you've never met. I can kill an orc at anyone's game! And when James Wyatt leaned over and said, "Good job!" I was liberated! I can play D&D with the best of them!

The following Wednesday I showed up to my regular game 6 minutes late. I did not offer any two-bit tactical advice, and once or twice I caught myself engaged in unrelated table talk. But I still hold true to the belief that Dungeon Mastering has made me a better player and that my group is lucky to have me. I do make a mean cheesecake if nothing else.

About the Author

Since writing this article, Shelly insists she must be addressed as Shelly Masternoble. Since instilling this mandate, no one has talked to Shelly and she has changed it back in an effort to "keep it real."

Organizing Your First Forgotten Realms Game

BY CHRIS TULACH

If you've been reading this column, we've already given you the lowdown on the RPGA's newest shared-world campaign, Living Forgotten Realms (see the RPGA Report in *Dragon* #365 for more information). But let's say you're interested in getting a Living Forgotten Realms game organized for your group. What do you do? Where do you go? Look no further, the answers are here!

First off, you'll need to become an RPGA member. The easiest way for an organizer to become a member is to enroll in the Wizards Play Network (or WPN). All you need to do is head to www.wizards.com/wpn. Read over the material on the site and follow the process to become a Gateway-level organizer. That enrolls you in the RPGA and gives you a number. Activate that number, and you'll receive a second email with your password. Hang on to your number and password; you'll need that to order adventures and sanction events.

Before you order your first Living Forgotten Realms (LFR) adventures, you'll want to read over the material for LFR on the RPGA website. Simply click on one of the links to Living Forgotten Realms on the home page. In particular, you'll want to download the "RPGA Character Creation Guide" so your group can create characters specific to the LFR campaign.

Most LFR adventures run about 4 hours long, which makes them great for an evening of gaming. They're serialized in nature; most of the plot elements begin and end in the span of the adventure, with possibly a few clues that point towards future adventures. LFR adventures are also easy to prep and let your group get a taste of all sorts of different regions in the Forgotten Realms.

Next, get your group organized for your first session. You might want to ask them what adventure they'd like to play; a complete list of Living Forgotten Realms adventures is available on the LFR pages. Or you can just surprise them and pick one that sounds fun! All the adventures released in August and September 2008 (3rd Quarter 2008) are designed for 1st–4th-level characters, which is what you'll want when you begin.

Once you've figured out what you want to do for your first adventure, you'll need to sanction the event to receive the adventure via download. You can even sanction your game on the same day that you're going to play! This is straightforward; click on the link located on the RPGA home page on the RPGA tab on the site's left navigation called "Sanction an Event." You'll log into your profile, and then be taken to the event sanctioning page. Click on the Dungeons & Dragons logo and just follow the steps to set up your event type and fill in your event details.

After you've filled out those details, you'll get to select adventures from the library. There's a handy filter you can use to show only Living Forgotten Realms adventures available; it's located at the top of the page. After selecting each adventure you want by clicking the "add" check box next to those adventures, hit the button at the bottom of the viewable adventures to add them to your event. Once you're satisfied with what you've ordered, hit the next button, and you'll confirm your event.

Then, check your email inbox to ensure that a confirmation of your event has been sent. You can find the adventures you selected under the "My Events" tab in your profile when you're logged in.

Download the adventures when you're ready and distribute them to your DMs (or read them yourself if you're the DM). Make sure you print out enough copies of the story award certificates and tracking forms for your game. You'll need one tracking form per session, and one certificate for each player playing in the session.

Then, have a great time with your game! Be sure to fill out the tracking form and log back into your profile once you finish the session to report your play. Reporting play ensures that the data is loaded into the character tracker for each character, and if you've signed up for D&D Rewards, you earn points that get you cool D&D swag!

Once you've gone through the sanctioning process once, it's easy to repeat for future events. If you ever have a question about sanctioning or reporting your games, simply send an email to us at dci@wizards.com. We'll get back to you right away with a response!

That's all for this time; next time, we'll talk about being a DM for Living Forgotten Realms. Until then, good gaming!

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, Chris Tulach actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has recently become the RPGA® Content Manager, responsible for the development and deployment of Dungeons & Dragons organized play programs.

Fun with Pigs and Other Stories

by Bill Slavicsek

Is it really September already? Time sure flies by when you're having fun. And, for me, August was packed full of fun and excitement. The highlights were Gen Con and PAX, two great shows full of great things to do and great people to talk to.

I approached Gen Con with an equal measure of anticipation and trepidation. Were the fans going to be pumped up and excited about 4th Edition D&D like we are (and as our sales and other metrics indicate), or were they going to hurl rotten fruit at us when we got up in front of the seminar crowds? Now, I really didn't expect the latter, but hey ... you never know. From the moment we entered the exhibit hall and the crowds came streaming in, all we heard were congratulatory comments, glowing testimonials about how this player or that player loves the new edition, and an unending series of questions about what's coming next on the release schedule. It was amazing and very gratifying, and it was the response we had been hoping to receive.

More than one D&D player came up to me during the show to tell me about how the new edition brought him or her back to the hobby. I had a significant number of players approach me to say that the Delve or one of the RPGA events (which were full all weekend) was the first time they got to play 4th Edition, and now they couldn't wait to keep playing in their own campaigns. I think that that's the secret to getting into the new edition. You can't just check out a blog or a message board or an incomplete review to get a sense of the game, and you can't just read through the new Player's Handbook and immediately grok the intricacies of the new system. You have to get in there and play.

Throughout the weekend, all of the RPGA events and Delve slots were packed, our booth was hopping, and our seminars drew great crowds. From the activities surrounding the 20th anniversary of Drizzt to our 4th Edition Q&A's, we encountered enthusiasm, excitement, and a sense of wonder that we hadn't seen in years. To everyone who stopped by to play a game or ask a question or listen to us talk, I thank you all.

I was at PAX for a smaller amount of time, but that show was certainly hopping! We drew a constant stream of people to our signing, and the game hall was full of happy players playing D&D. Everyone I spoke to from my team and around the company had a great time at PAX, and hopefully we'll expand our programming there next year.

Here a Pig, There a Pig ...

Speaking of fun, I had a great session last week at my Thursday night D&D game. The adventurers have been building toward a confrontation with the mysterious Lord Neverlight, who they have learned commands a vast army of undead and is preparing to invade the unsuspecting and peaceful lands they have come to know and love. After an intense session where the PCs battled a mummy lord and its allies, and then had to figure out (using a skill challenge) how to make the skeletal warships that rose from the sea return to the shadowy depths without disgorging their undead hordes, the PCs were faced with a grave decision. Should they follow the escaping mummy lord through the strange portal? Or should they depart these haunted shores and find a new adventure to dig their teeth into?

After a short deliberation, the team decided to leap into the unknown and finally confront Neverlight in his lair. Girding themselves to deal with endless armies of undead creatures, the adventurers entered the portal ... and found themselves in an even stranger, scarier place than they had ever imagined. They had somehow wound up in a sleepy island village of friendly, peaceful folk. Everyone they encountered had a smile and a pleasant greeting to share—and a pig under their arms.

I wanted to throw something unexpected at the party after the long parade of undead monsters. Something that would throw them for a loop, but in a good way. I dug out every Farmer miniature I had from the Desert of Desolation set. You know, the cute, friendly looking guy carrying a pig under his arm. So, what they saw on the village market map was what their PCs were seeing—a dozen friendly faces, each nodding and smiling and petting their pigs.

This had the desired effect. It creeped my players out. Why were all these villagers so happy? Why were they all carrying pigs? Why were unseen children singing about how happy they were so that the sickly sweet melody filled the quiet streets? And how come whenever the PCs asked a tough or personal question, the villager they were speaking to shifted his or her eyes and starting nervously petting a pig? Was this the Stepford Pigs? And where were Neverlight and the mummy lord? What the heck was going on?

Hee hee. It was a great session, inspired in part by one humble little miniature. And it had my players talking about the events for days afterwards. Wait until they see what I put on the table next time!

And Now For Something Completely Different

Next month, I'll report on a private event I'll be attending next week. I'm gathering my original gaming group and meeting them in Las Vegas. We're going to spend four days and four nights playing D&D. For all of them, it will be their first time playing the new rules, and I don't think any of them have played D&D since we did this two years ago as a sort of reunion. Last time, we had a blast. I'll let you know how everything turns out this time when next I sit down to write this column.

Until then, here's a preview from the upcoming *Martial Power* sourcebook. Enjoy!

Keep playing,

Bill

NEW BUILD: TEMPEST FIGHTER

Rather than a shield or a big weapon, you have specialized in fighting using a weapon in each hand.

You see it as the best of both worlds—given the right training, you can deliver good damage and make up for the lack of a shield with deft parrying. Strength remains any soldier's bread and butter, and good battlefield awareness—Wisdom—is a must. You also rely on speed, maneuverability, and agility—Dexterity—to get your dirty work done. Constitution is a tertiary ability for you, granting useful staying power against foes not so easily fooled by your fancy footwork and feints. The Tempest Technique class feature is designed to complement this build.

Suggested Feat: Two-Weapon Fighting (Human feat: Two-Weapon Threat*)

Suggested Skills: Athletics, Intimidate, Streetwise
Suggested At-Will Powers: *dual strike,** *footwork lure**
Suggested Encounter Power: *funneling flurry**
Suggested Daily Power: *tempest dance**
*New option presented in this book

Tempest Technique

When you wield two melee weapons, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with weapons that have the offhand property.

At-Will Powers

Dual Strike — **Fighter Attack 1**

You lash out quickly and follow up faster, delivering two small wounds.

At-Will ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee weapon**
Requirement: You must be wielding two melee weapons.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC (main weapon and off-hand weapon), two attacks
Hit: 1[W] damage per attack.
Increase damage to 2[W] per attack at 21st level.

Encounter Powers

Distracting Spate — **Fighter Attack 1**

Your flurry of feints and strikes leaves your foe's defenses unsteady.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.
Weapon: If you're wielding two melee weapons, the attack deals extra damage equal to your Dexterity modifier.

You gain Two-Weapon Defense as a bonus feat, even if you don't meet the prerequisites.

When wearing light armor or chainmail, you gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls with melee and close weapon attacks when you are wielding two weapons. This bonus increases to +2 with weapons that have the off-hand property.

Funneling Flurry — **Fighter Attack 1**

With snakelike strikes, you force two of your enemies to move where you want them.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding two melee weapons.
Targets: Two creatures
Attack: Strength vs. AC (main weapon and off-hand weapon), one attack per target
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and you slide the target 1 square.

Weaponmaster's Lure — **Fighter Attack 23**

You make a passing attack, throwing your foe off balance. With a shove, you send him stumbling away as you switch positions with him.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding two melee weapons.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC (main weapon and off-hand weapon), two attacks
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage per attack. If one attack hits, you can swap places with the target. If both attacks hit, you can swap places with the target and slide it 3 squares. If you have combat advantage against the target, each attack deals extra damage equal to your Dexterity modifier.